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MEMOIRS

OF

SARAH

DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH,

AND OF THE

COURT OF QUEEN ANNE.

BY MRS. A. T. THOMSON,

AUTHORESS OF "MEMOIRS OF THE COURT OF HENRY THE EIGHTH,"
"LIFE OF SIR WALTER RALEIGH," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
MDCCCXXXIX.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY IBOTSON AND PALMER,
SAVOY STREET.

DA
462
M4
T4
v. 2

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

CHAPTER I.

1703-4.

Character of Lord Peterborough—Of Lord Montague—Marriage of the Lady Mary Churchill with Lord Monthermer—Character and success of her husband—The violence of party spirit at this era—Conduct of the Duchess in politics—Her dislike to Lord Rochester—His character Preferment of Harley to the secretaryship—Views originally entertained by Marlborough and Lord Godolphin—Anecdote of Lord Wharton at Bath—A proof of political rancour.

AMONGST those friends who hastened to pour forth their condolences to the Duchess of Marlborough on the loss of her son, the celebrated

Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, was one of the first, and amongst the most eager to testify his concern. This nobleman, whose enmity towards Marlborough became afterwards conspicuous, was at this time one of the numerous votaries of the arrogant Duchess. Lord Peterborough's extravagances gave a meteor-like celebrity to his general character. Among many of the celebrated individuals who illumined the age, he would, nevertheless, have been eminent, even had his course been less peculiar, and his deportment like that of ordinary men.

The eventful public life of this nobleman began in the reign of Charles the Second; at the early age of eighteen, he had distinguished himself in the cause of patriotism by attending Algernon Sidney to the scaffold, an act of kindness and of courage, which was the commencement of his singular career. "He lived," says Horace Walpole, "a romance, and was capable of making it a history." † At this period of his life, nature and fortune alike combined to favour the brilliancy of that career, which, in its eccentricities, and in the rapid succession of events by which it was marked, had not a parallel in the times of which we treat. Lord Peterborough owed much to cir-

* Royal and Noble Authors, art. Peterborough.

cumstances. Of high ancestry, an earl by birth, and afterwards by creation, being the first Earl of Monmouth, he graced his favoured station by the charm of his manners, by his varied accomplishments, and by the union of a daring courage with the highest cultivation of the intellectual powers. Celebrated for the wit which he delighted to display, his enterprising character was enhanced in the estimation of all who admired valour, by those personal advantages which the imagination is disposed to combine with heroism and with eloquence. In both, he exceeded most other men of his time. Without being worthy of challenging a comparison with Marlborough, he dazzled, he interested, he astonished the world. He "was a man," as Pope truly describes him, "resolved neither to live nor to die like other men." * In those days, when a constellation of bright stars threw a lustre over the annals of our country, Lord Peterborough shone conspicuous, even whilst Marlborough lived to pursue successive triumphs.

The varied scenes through which Lord Peterborough passed, contributed to form "the strange compound" which so much amused society. He began his warlike exploits in the naval service; and even whilst he cultivated the Muses, "appeared

* Pope's Letters to Swift, p. 76.

emulous to mix only with the rough and then untutored tars of ocean." * Disgusted with a maritime life, he became a land officer; yet alternately assisted in the council, or dazzled the senate with his oratory. His brilliant exploits in Spain were the result of consummate skill, aided by a romantic daring, which converted even the gallantries into which the profligacy of the age and his own laxity of principle betrayed him, into sources of assistance to his designs. It has been said that he employed the illusions of perspective, which he well understood, to impose on the enemy with respect to the number of troops under his command. Whatever were his arts, the results of his wonderful energy and bravery were so effective as very nearly to transfer the crown of Spain from the Bourbon to the Austrian family.

The abilities of this nobleman as a negociator were equally remarkable; nor was the celerity of his movements a circumstance to be overlooked, in times when such exertions as those which Peterborough made to compass sea and land, appeared almost miraculous. Ever on the wing, he excelled even Lord Sunderland in the rapidity of his migrations, and is said "to have seen more kings and postilions than any man in Europe."

* Noble, vol. ii. p. 43.

So singular a course could not be maintained, nor such unparalleled dexterity acquired, without the strong, impelling power of vanity. Lord Peterborough, with all his attainments, after long experience, with some admirable qualities of the heart, was the slave of that pervading impulse, the love of admiration. The friend of Pope and Swift, the associate of Marlborough, delighted to declaim in a coffee-house, and to be the centre of any admiring circle, no matter whom or what. The vanity of Peterborough is, however, matter of little surprise: it was the besetting sin of those wild yet gifted companions of the days of his early youth, Rochester, Sedley, Buckingham, and Wharton, who competed to attain the highest pitch of profligacy, characterised by the most extravagant degree of absurdity and reckless eccentricity. To be pre-eminent in demoralisation was not, in such times, a matter of easy attainment; therefore it became necessary for the aspirant for that species of fame to garnish deeds of guilt which might be deemed commonplace, with such accompaniments of fancy as men utterly lost to shame, without a sense of decency, without time for remorse, without fear of hell, or belief in heaven, could, in the depths of their infamy, contrive and devise.

Lord Peterborough and Lord Wharton, dis-

regarding all moral obligations, gave birth to sons, who, reared under their baneful influence, carried the precepts of their parental tempters into an extremity far exceeding what even those exemplary parents could have anticipated. In Philip, Duke of Wharton, the world beheld, happily, almost the last of that series of rich, profligate, bold, and desperate men, who, like the second Buckingham, gilded a few fair points of character by the aid of resplendent talents. It was the destiny of Lord Peterborough to reap disappointment and chagrin from the seed which he had sown in the mind of his eldest son and heir, John Lord Mordaunt, whom he survived. *

* The Earl married, first, Carey, daughter of Sir Alexander Frazer, and, secondly, the accomplished Anatasia Robinson, the daughter of a painter. The story of his lordship's lovesuit to this lady shows at once the licentiousness and the eccentricity of his character. Whilst he admired the virtues of Miss Robinson, and her efforts in her vocation as an opera singer and a teacher of music and Italian, to support an aged father, he did not deem it beneath him to endeavour to make her his mistress. His arts were unsuccessful, and Anastasia became privately his wife. In 1735 it suited his fancy to proclaim his marriage. Being at Bath, in the public rooms, a servant was ordered to call out distinctly, "Lady Peterborough's carriage waits;" on which every lady of rank and respectability rose, and wished the new Countess joy.—Granger, vol. ii. p. 45.

The regard of Lord Peterborough at this period for the Duchess of Marlborough was as assiduous as his enmity towards her and the Duke became afterwards remarkable. In a letter written soon after their common loss, he urged upon the bereaved father the necessity of seeking in society the solace to his mournful reflections. In other effusions of friendship, addressed to the Duchess, the Earl is profuse in the language of gallantry; and, if we might believe in professions, felt an ardour of admiration which led him to declare, "that he feared no other uneasiness than not being able to meet those opportunities which might contribute to what he most desired, the continuation of the Duchess's good opinion." *

These expressions had a deeper meaning than compliment; and Lord Peterborough sought also a closer connexion than friendship with the exalted house of Marlborough. The Lady Mary Churchill, the youngest daughter of the Duke and Duchess, and, at the time of her brother's death, the only unmarried daughter, was one of the most distinguished of her family for beauty, as well as for the higher qualities of the mind and heart. Twenty-two

* Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 4.

years afterwards, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, speaking of this lovely woman, described her as still so pre-eminent in her hereditary charms, that she might then (in 1725) "be the reigning beauty, if she pleased."* Lady Mary, afterwards the object of her mother's aversion, was, in her early days, the pride and darling of both parents, and the frequent subject of mention in her father's letters. Even in her sixteenth year there were many suitors who aspired to her hand, and amongst others the son of Lord Peterborough, the young Lord Mordaunt, whose suit was urged by his father, but rejected by the Duke of Marlborough, on account of the dissolute character of the young nobleman. It was probably this disappointment which first chilled the friendship of Lord Peterborough, and turned it into rancour.

Proposals of marriage from the Earl of Huntingdon, son of Lord Cromarty, were also made to Lady Mary, but in vain;† the character of his father, Lord Cromarty, who was, according to Cunningham, "long looked upon as a state mountebank," probably operating against the young man's addresses; for the Duchess sought to extend and strengthen her connexions, and not to en-

* Lady M. W.'s Letters, vol. ii. p. 168.

† Coxe, vol. i. p. 232.

danger the stability of her fortune by an alliance with the weak or the disreputable. Political reasons, it has been said by historians, decided the destiny of the fair victim, than whom "there was not in England," says Cunningham, "a more acceptable sacrifice to be offered up for appeasing the rage of parties," and caused her finally to become the wife of Lord Monthermer, eldest son of the Earl of Montague. Marlborough, as Cunningham relates, before setting out on his latest campaign, "fearing lest Whigs and Tories should combine together to ruin him, recommended to his wife to propose a marriage of one of his daughters to the Earl of Montague's son, as a means of their reconciliation, and the establishment of his own power." *

The projected alliance, in most important respects, appeared to be highly advantageous. The House of Montague, anciently Montacute, was already connected with some of the wealthiest and most powerful among the nobility. Resembling, in one respect, the Churchill family, the progenitors of the young man on whom Lady Mary's hand was ultimately bestowed, had been devoted to the service of the Stuarts. There is a tradition that one of the race, Edward Montague, who held the office of Master of the Horse to Queen

* Cunningham, b. vi. p. 328.

Katharine, wife of Charles the Second, was removed from his post, for venturing to press the hand of his royal mistress,—an offence not likely to be of frequent occurrence, if historians have not done great injustice to the amiable but ungainly Katharine of Braganza.

The father of John Duke of Montague, who married Lady Mary Churchill, was a singular instance of something more than prudence,—even cupidity,—combined with liberality and a great mind. This nobleman enjoyed a fortunate, if not a happy life. He was appointed ambassador at the Court of France, by the especial favour of Charles the Second; and conferred on his station, as such, as much honour as he received from so distinguished a mission. During his residence at Paris, he secured the hand of the Countess of Northumberland, a rich widow, who had quitted England to escape the disgraceful addresses of Charles the Second. By this union he secured an income of six thousand a year; which was farther increased, upon his return to England, by his purchase of the place of Master of the King's Wardrobe, for which he paid six thousand pounds. The prosperity of the family was, however, checked during the reign of James the Second, who, in consequence of Lord Montague's known

enmity to the Roman Catholics, took from him the post which he had obtained. This disgust prepared the offended nobleman for the Revolution, towards which he contributed by his influence and exertions. Honours and fortune then became abundant. The titles of Earl of Montague and Viscount Monthermer succeeded to that of a simple baron. A second marriage added to his wealth; for his first wife having died in giving birth to his only surviving son, he resolved to acquire, by an union with the Duchess of Albemarle, a revenue of six thousand pounds additional to his wealth, and, moreover, to unite his family with the house of Newcastle. The Duchess of Albemarle, whom he for these interested motives addressed, was the heiress of Henry Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, and relict of Christopher March, Duke of Albemarle. There was only one slight blot upon her perfections as a wife—she was insane. In her delusion she had resolved to marry no one but a monarch; but her suitor soon compassed this difficulty, for he is said, with what truth it is not easy to determine, to have wooed and married her, in 1690, as Emperor of China, and to have cherished the delusion, which appears to have lasted nearly forty years; for the Duchess, during her residence at Newcastle-house in

Clerkenwell, where she lived until her death, in 1734, would never suffer any person to serve her, save on the bended knee.* A later acquisition of wealth to the family took place, also, on the death of the celebrated Sir Ralph Winwood, Secretary of State to James the Second.

The vast fortune which had been thus from various sources accumulated, was spent by the Earl of Montague in a manner peculiarly befitting his lofty station. He could sustain his rank with splendour and dignity, and yet think his table honoured, not encumbered, by the presence of learned men, of no rank, but whose talents shed upon their well-judging patron a reflected lustre which wealth could not give. At his magnificent residence in Bloomsbury-house, now the British Museum, the ingenious St. Evremond, and other eminent foreigners, were seen mingling with the wits and artists of the time, in saloons and halls, to garnish which the arts of painting and sculpture had been called into requisition, and liberally remunerated. The taste of this excellent and high-minded nobleman for architecture, for gardening, as well as for the other arts which embellish, was displayed both in his abode in London and his estate

* Noble, vol. ii. p. 36.

in Northamptonshire. His style of living corresponded with his lofty ideas, and equalled, if it did not excel, that of the most princely of his contemporaries.

From this noble stock sprang John Montague, Viscount Monthermer, who became the son-in-law of Marlborough. An intimacy had for some time subsisted between the Earl his father, and the Duchess, his future mother-in-law.* But the Lady Mary Churchill, his destined bride, when the match was proposed to her, proved averse from complying with the wishes of her parents, having already, as report alleged, "set her eyes and her heart upon another young gentleman, a very handsome youth." "Yet she must," adds Cunningham, "have obeyed her mother's commands immediately, had not an accident happened, which proved very lamentable to the Marlborough family." The event to which he alludes was the death of Lord Blandford; and the marriage of the reluctant young lady was suspended until the period of mourning had been duly observed. It then, however, took place; for it was not the custom of the day to take into account the affections, in the calculations which were made in matrimonial contracts. Nor were the

* Boyer, App., p. 46.

family of the young bridegroom likely to relax in their efforts to promote a favourable issue. Such is the mutability of human affections, and the folly of our most ardent desires, that Marlborough appears afterwards to have disliked, and the Duchess to have despised, though without adequate reason, the man whom she at this time preferred for her son-in-law. "All his talents," thus she wrote of his lordship thirty-seven years afterwards, "lie in things natural in boys of fifteen years old, and he is about two-and-fifty—to get people into his garden and wet them with squirts, and to invite people to his country-houses, and put things into their beds to make them itch, and twenty such pretty fancies like these."* Such was her opinion of this son-in-law; how far it was guided by prejudice will be seen presently.

The union, when once completed, seems to have afforded many means of happiness to the beautiful Lady Mary. As far as worldly advantages were to be considered, she encountered no disappointment. Soon after her marriage, the father of her husband was created a duke through the interest of her parents, and the reversion of the post of master of the wardrobe settled on his son through the influence of the Duchess of

* Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 197.

Marlborough, and, as she herself alleges, as part of her daughter's portion. *

An unbroken course of prosperity attended the long life of Lord Monthermer, who had not many years to wait before he attained a higher title, on the death of his father, the Duke of Montague.† The disposition and character of the Lord Monthermer, those most important points of all, were, notwithstanding the character given of him by the Duchess, said, by a keen-sighted judge, to have been truly amiable. "He was," says Horace Walpole, writing to his friend Sir Horace Mann, "with some foibles, a most amiable man, and one of the most feeling I ever knew." "He had," says Lord Hailes, in reference to the Duchess's description of the Duke's childish propensities, "other pretty fancies, not mentioned in the memoranda of his mother-in-law; he did good without ostentation. His vast benevolence of soul is not recorded by Pope; but it will be remembered while there is any tradition of human kindness or charity in England." The defects of this nobleman appear to have been a thirst for gain, producing an inveterate place-hunting, which detracted from his better qualities. "He was," says Walpole, "incessantly obtaining new, and making the most of

* Cunningham, b. vi. p. 328. † Boyer.

all: he had quartered on the great wardrobe no less than thirty nominal tailors and arras workers,"—employments which were dropped at his death. This corrupt proceeding he redeemed, in some measure, by great liberality, paying out of his own property no less than two thousand a year in private pensions. The Duke of Montague's talents fitted him indeed for better things than the grovelling love of gain. Sir Robert Walpole entertained so high an opinion of his abilities, that he was very desirous that the Duke should command the forces,—a charge which his grace, fearful of his own experience, declined.* He received, with his bride, an addition to her portion of ten thousand pounds, presented on the occasion by the Queen, who had conferred a similar gift on Lady Bridgewater. What was of still more importance, the favour of Anne was continued to him when the Marlborough family was disgraced, and the high offices which he held under George the First and Second attested the continuance of royal regard.

1703. The Duke of Marlborough passed the summer of this year in fruitless attempts to stimulate the timid spirit of the Dutch generals with whom, as commander-in-chief, he was destined to co-operate, and to unite the discordant opinions by which his operations against the

* Walpole's Letters, vol. ii. p. 401.

French were weakened, and his plans wholly frustrated. So harassed and dispirited was the great commander at this time, when all his persuasions could not avail to induce the allied armies to attack the French lines, that he looked forward with something like pleasure to the projected siege of Limburg, as to a sort of episode to his weary existence amongst his friendly, but obstinate coadjutors. One painful and inconvenient effect of mental anxiety continually attacked the Duke, in the cruel form of continual and severe headache. To this, and to the harassed frame and dejected spirits of which it was a concomitant, he refers, when writing to the Duchess, in terms which ought to have made an affectionate wife careful lest she should increase his uneasiness by any line of conduct which she could possibly avoid.

"When* I last writ to you, I was so much disordered, that I writ in very great pain. I cannot say I am yet well, for my head aches violently, and I am afraid you will think me lightheaded, when I tell you that I go to-morrow to the siege of Limburg, in hopes to recover my health. But it is certainly true that I shall have more quiet there than I have here; for I have been these last six days in a perpetual dispute,

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 284.

and there I shall have nobody but such as will willingly obey me."

The Duchess was too much absorbed in her own schemes, to regard the unkindness and impropriety of adding to her husband's perplexities, which were already sufficiently overpowering, and which demanded an undisturbed attention. She was carried along, as it were, by a torrent. Her hopes, her endeavours, centered all in one point; the abasement of the high church party, and the establishment of the Whigs at the head of affairs, were the objects of her political existence. To accomplish this purpose, she now employed all the force of her arguments, not only to convert the Duke, but by correspondence, and in conversation, to sway the mind of her sovereign, and bend it to her purpose.

The marriage between the two great families of Churchill and Montague was intended to propitiate the favour both of Whigs and Tories, by adding connexions among each of those parties to the interests of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. Never was there a period in which party spirit manifested itself with greater virulence than at the present juncture, and the contentions in parliament were so vehement, that a dreadful storm seemed impending over the country. The popularity of the Whigs was increased,

and strong suspicions were entertained that even the Queen's inclinations began to be favourable to that party. "But what was matter of hope to the Whigs," observes Cunningham, "seemed to the Tories to be only a dangerous tempest ready to break upon the church; and the furious clergy began to prophesy and report about the country great dangers of—the Lord knows what! So that it was now easy to perceive what influence there is in England in the mere cry of religion."*

The Duchess of Marlborough was not inactive in the midst of this tempest of parties. Her dislike to Lord Rochester, and her abhorrence of the pretensions to superiority in spiritual affairs assumed, according to her notions, by that nobleman and his partisans, were the main sources of her adoption of Whig principles. Lord Rochester had, in the former reign, offended her pride by urging upon the King her removal from the service of the Princess Anne. The wound was inflamed continually, and, at last, the enmity rose to open hostilities. Lord Rochester was as averse to a reconciliation with his haughty foe as the Duchess herself; their influence bore the semblance of rivalship; their advice drew the compliant Queen dif-

* Cunningham, book vi. p. 350.

ferent ways; Lord Rochester guided the prejudices, the Duchess governed the affections of her royal slave. Finally, female influence prevailed: for when have men adequately opposed its sway? Yet it is certain, first, that Anne long resisted the arguments of her friend, and, secondly, that the Duchess would never have been completely successful, had not the violence and arrogance of her foes blazed out, and proved the most opportune and effectual aid that ever plotting woman received. To "the mad conduct of the tacking Tories," as the Duchess termed the ill-judged manœuvres of that party, she owed, as she acknowledged, the temporary abatement, for it could not be called a change, that was effected in the Queen's high church fervour, and obstinate, yet honest Toryism.*

Lord Rochester, who, as long as he remained in existence, was the chief object of the Duchess's political displeasure—the thorn which, in the midst of her greatness, rankled in her side—was a man highly esteemed, not only by the party whose tenets he zealously and powerfully supported, but by the country in general. Far from being entirely indebted for the consideration which he enjoyed, to "the accident," as the Duchess termed it, which made him uncle to the

* Conduct, p. 159.

Queen, his earnestness and steadiness, during a long political life, had insured him universal respect, heightened, in the minds of those of the old school of English politics, by his relationship to the great historian and advocate of their party. There is a sort of reputation, a description of influence, which consistency, whether it be to the most approved or the most unpopular opinions of the time, can alone purchase. From the time that Lord Rochester, when Mr. Hyde, had pleaded for his father before the House of Commons, reconciling his filial love with his public duty, he had held an even, and, as far as the great changes in affairs would permit, an unequivocal line of conduct. After the bill against occasional Conformity was rejected, Lord Rochester first began to evince that "deep discontent with the Queen and her administration,"* which secret jealousies, and a real difference of sentiment had long been fostering in his mind. In the previous year, he had, in anger, declined the lieutenancy of Ireland, upon the Queen's urging him to go to that country, the affairs of which required his presence. His resignation was followed, in 1704, by that of Lord Nottingham, who resigned the secretaryship upon the Queen's refusal to dismiss the Dukes of Devon-

* Conduct, p. 141.

shire and Somerset from the council. This step on the part of Lord Nottingham was far more important in its consequences to the future fortunes of the Marlborough family, than they could, at that moment, possibly have foretold. After a month's delay his place was filled up, and Harley, the prudent, the conciliating, and moderate, but aspiring Harley, succeeded to it; holding, at the same time, the office of Speaker of the House of Commons and that of Secretary of State—two appointments that had hitherto never been assigned to the same person.*

This preferment Harley owed chiefly to the favour of Marlborough and Godolphin, who considered him as a very proper person to manage the House of Commons.† They knew his talents, but they were not acquainted with the extent of his ambition, nor with his actual sentiments. Towards Marlborough, this able and celebrated minister expressed, at this time, an ardent attachment, and a lively concern in the recent loss which the great general had sustained in the death of Lord Blandford. "I will not," he says, in a letter to the Duke on that topic, "call it your grace's loss, but our common misfortune. I do feel it, that a limb is torn off; therefore I think, for the preservation of the residue, grief

* Burnet. † Conduct, p. 171.

should be moderated: time, I know, is the best physician in this case; but our necessities require a quicker remedy." *

The Duchess, who must be regarded as the mainspring of all political changes at this period, had now inadvertently planted an enemy in the heart of the citadel. Whilst her husband was in Holland, distracted by contending factions and corroding jealousies, which, to use his own phrase, "made his life a burthen," she had been diligently exerting the faculties of her ingenious mind to displace Nottingham, Seymour, and Lord Jersey, and to effect an union between her husband and the Whigs. Her efforts, like female interference generally, embarrassed rather than aided the Whigs, to whom she extended her gracious aid. They rendered, also, the path of her husband through the political mazes which surrounded him, more perplexing. Although the Whig party had encouraged Marlborough's favourite schemes for the subversion of the power of France, neither he nor Godolphin desired to throw themselves into the hands of a party to whose measures they were from education averse. It was the wish and intention of these able men to act independently of party, and to promote the introduction of statesmen of sound morals

* Conduct, p. 172.

and of moderate views into the cabinet, without regarding the political distinctions which proved so inconvenient to those who solely desired the advancement of the public good, and the benefit, at home and abroad, of her Majesty's interests.

The violence of the Tories, and their determination to obtain a complete ascendency, frustrated this well-considered line of conduct on the part of Marlborough and his friend. Lord Rochester had been supported by Nottingham, in his opposition to that line of foreign policy which Marlborough had most at heart. Lord Godolphin had even, at one time, purposed to send in his resignation; for he found that he and his friend were losing the support of the Tories, without gaining that of the Whigs. The Queen overwhelmed the Lord Treasurer with reproaches whenever he hinted at the necessity of conciliating the Whigs. Godolphin, in despair, despatched letters to the Hague, filled with complaints to his friend. Marlborough, though by no means in an enviable situation himself, regarded that of Godolphin as still more pitiable. "I have very little rest here," he remarks, writing from the camp; "but I should have less quiet of mind, if I were obliged to be in your station." "I do from my heart pity you," he says, in another place, "and everybody that has to do with un-

reasonable people; for certainly (and who will not join in the reflection?) it is much better to row in the galleys than to have to do with such as are very selfish, and misled by everybody that speaks to them, which I believe is the case of the author of your two letters."

The Duchess was not a person to conciliate differences, nor to soothe the irritated passions of the two great men over whom she had an ascendency. She delighted to show her controul over the Queen, and vexed the weak spirit of Anne by reading extracts from Marlborough's letters, complaining of the Tories. In particular, she failed not to transmit to her Majesty certain hints which Marlborough and Godolphin had thrown out of their projected resignations. Good Queen Anne then hastened to dispel such notions, and to reassure her beloved Mr. and Mrs. Freeman, and their friend and confidante Godolphin, who figured in her familiar letters under the name of "Montgomery," of her unabated regard. Thus the aim of the arrogant Duchess was answered.

The Earl of Jersey, who was suspected of a close correspondence with the court of St. Germains, of course seconded the opposition of Rochester and Nottingham. The Duke of Buckingham, Lord Privy Seal, was equally devoted to what was termed the high church party, though

not so reputed a partisan of the exiled family as the weak, but dangerous, Lord Jersey. These noblemen all united in controverting, by every possible endeavour, the designs and propositions of Marlborough.*

Whilst the fervour of politics was at its height, the Queen was advised by her physicians to go to Bath. It was singular that Lord Wharton and Lord Somers were at the same time ordered to go to that fashionable resort for the recovery of their health. Lord Wharton, exhausted by his parliamentary exertions, and Lord Somers, frequently an invalid, were probably not unwilling to avail themselves of this opportunity of combining business with pleasure. The public, indeed, regarded the whole as a scheme among the physicians, and considered the Queen's illness as only a pretext for meeting these two great Whig partisans on the neutral ground which a place like Bath affords. Many of the Tories who were in that city, insulted the Whigs in public meetings and assemblies. The Whigs returned the insult, nor did the Queen wholly escape some annoyances, when it was understood that she was willing to see Lord Somers. But the placid Anne looked on these demonstrations of party spirit with a smiling countenance, and " hoped to extinguish all their party flames

* Coxe.

in the waters of the Bath." Those praises of her frugality, her constancy, her "English heart,"* which she had been in the habit of hearing from her subjects, were now no longer expressed; and the Queen returned to London from Bath, in all the miseries of unpopularity.

Lord Wharton, the veteran promoter of Whig principles, and father of the eccentric and infamous Duke of Wharton, had no sooner reached Bath than he was challenged, upon the pretence of affront, by a Mr. Dashwood, a hot young Tory, who was desirous of stepping forward to signalise himself in behalf of his party. Lord Wharton in vain offered the young man such satisfaction as a man of honour might give, without fighting; but neither his age nor his infirmities appeased the ardour of Dashwood, who insisted on a duel. The parties met, fought, as was the custom, with swords, and Dashwood was disarmed by the old lord, who, in consideration of the youth and zeal of his opponent, spared his life, and even gave him the honour of his acquaintance. But Mr. Dashwood, unable to sustain the reproaches of the world for his cowardice and rude fury in challenging so old a man, died soon afterwards, it is said, through shame and vexation.†

* Cunningham, b. vi. p. 351. † Ibid.

Such were some of the effects of that political rancour for which this free country has been, and probably ever will be, remarkable. The ladies of the time, it appears, were as zealous in those days as they often prove in this more enlightened age.

CHAPTER II.

Conduct of Lord Sunderland—Influence of the Duchess understood at foreign courts—Anecdote of Charles the Third of Spain.—1708-4.

LORD SUNDERLAND, at this time on terms of confidence with his mother-in-law, the Duchess of Marlborough, was one of the most active agents of the Whig party, in making overtures to Marlborough and Godolphin. Of powerful talents, although taunted by Swift with the imputation "of knowing a book better by the back than by the face," * and of multiplying them on his book-shelves without caring to read them, Sunderland, or his politics, were never wholly acceptable to Marlborough. Yet the Earl, though a violent party politician, knew how, in circum-

* Examiner, No. 26.

stances sufficiently trying, to prove his sincerity, and evince a real elevation of mind, by refusing from the Queen, upon his office of secretary being taken from him, a pension by way of compensation. His celebrated answer, "that if he could not have the honour to serve his country, he would not plunder it," * must have startled less scrupulous politicians; and, possibly, it might even sound strangely in our own days of boasted disinterestedness and enlightenment.

The Duke of Marlborough, in reply to advances made in behalf of the Whig party by Lord Sunderland, made this memorable answer: "that he hoped always to continue in the humour that he was then in, that is, to be governed by neither party, but to do what he should think best for England, by which he should disoblige both parties."† Thus ended, for the present, the negociation on the part of the Whigs.

The cabinet, therefore, continued to be composed of mixed ingredients. The Duke persevered steadily in that course which he deemed necessary, as far as foreign policy was concerned, to crush the reviving influence of the Pretender, whose subsequent attempts to recover the throne of his ancestors he plainly foresaw. From this conviction, he regarded a continued good

* Boyer, p. 472. † Coxe, p. 280.

understanding with the Dutch to be of paramount importance.*

"May God," he says, writing to the Duchess, "preserve me and my dearest love from seeing this come to pass;" alluding to a reconciliation with the French, and consequently with the Pretender and his family, through the medium of that nation; "but if we quarrel with the Dutch," he adds, "I fear it may happen." †

The influence of the Duchess of Marlborough at the court of Anne was now well understood by the continental powers of Europe. When England, this year, received a foreign potentate as her guest, the Duchess was, of all her subjects, the object peculiarly selected for distinction. Charles, the second son of the Emperor of Austria, having recently been proclaimed, at Vienna, King of Spain, in opposition to the Duke of Anjou, completed his visits to sundry courts in Germany, whither he had repaired to seek a wife, by paying his respects to Anne of England. He landed in this country about Christmas, and immediately despatched one of his attendants, Count Coloredo, to Windsor, to inform the Queen of his arrival. He soon, conducted by Marlborough, followed

* Coxe, p. 279. † Ibid.

his messenger to Windsor, where Anne received her royal ally with great courtesy, and entertained him with a truly royal magnificence. All ranks of people crowded to see the young monarch dine with the Queen in public, and his deportment and appearance were greatly admired by the multitude, more especially by the fair sex, whose national beauty was, on the other hand, highly extolled by Charles. The Duchess of Marlborough, though no longer young, still graced the court which she controlled. It was her office to hold the basin of water after dinner to the Queen, for the royal hands to be dipped, after the ancient fashion of the laver and ewer. Charles took the basin from the fair Duchess's hand, and, with the gallantry of a young and well-bred man, held it to the Queen; and in returning it to the Duchess, he drew from his own finger a valuable ring, and placed it on that of the stately Sarah. On taking leave of the Queen, he received, as might be expected, assurances of favour and support—a promise that was not "made to the ear, and broken to the hope," but was fulfilled by supplies of troops and money afterwards in Spain. During the time of the King's visit, open house was kept by the Queen for his reception and that of his retinue; and the nobility were not deficient in

their wonted hospitality, and the Duke of Marlborough was twice honoured by receiving the King as his guest.*

It was two years after this visit that Charles sent a letter of thanks for the assistance granted him by the Queen against the French, which he addressed to the Duchess of Marlborough, as "the person most agreeable to her Majesty." The King might have added, as a partisan most favourable to the aid afforded him, and most inimical to the sway of France, which, by the will of the late King of Spain, Charles the Second, had been unjustly extended over the Spanish monarchy.

Hitherto the achievements of Marlborough, however admirable, and compassed as they were with the loss of health and the destruction of happiness, had not contributed to effect the main objects of the war, in the manner which he had anticipated. At home, the Tory, or, as some historians of the day term it, the French faction, disseminated the notion that Marlborough and his party were squandering away the resources of the kingdom, in fruitless attempts against the wealthy and powerful sovereign of France. To combat his political foes, an union was effected between Lord Somers and Mr. Harley; and

* Coxe, p. 294, and Cunningham.

Godolphin, by the directions of Marlborough, endeavoured by every possible means to strengthen the moderate party in both Houses of Parliament.* The Duchess attacked the Queen with never-ending counsels and arguments; but all these exertions would possibly have been fruitless, had it not pleased Providence to bless the arms of Marlborough with signal success during the ensuing year.

"The Whigs," as the Duchess observed, "did indeed begin to be favoured, and with good reason.† For when they saw that the Duke of Marlborough prosecuted the common cause against the French with so much diligence and sincerity, they forgot their resentments for the partiality previously shown by him to their opponents, and extolled his feats with as much fervour as the Tories decried his efforts."

Marlborough, in the spring of the year 1704, embarked for Holland, with designs kept rigidly secret, embracing schemes of a greater magnitude than he had hitherto hoped to execute, and sanguine anticipations which were more than realised. The Duchess was left to combat at home the prepossessions of her royal mistress, as well as to repel the frequent projects which Marlborough, dispirited and home-sick, formed

* Cunningham, b. vi. p. 369. † Conduct, p. 145.

of retiring. He had, after the last campaign, quitted the continent with that intention; but, on reflection, a sincere and earnest desire to complete the great work which he had begun, and, possibly, the counsels of Godolphin and of the Duchess, who were both averse from his relinquishing his command, had prevailed over feelings of disappointment and chagrin.

Whilst affairs were in this position, the Tories made one expiring effort for power, by reviving the bill against occasional conformity. Until this time, the hopes of this ever vigorous and sanguine party had been maintained by the preference of the sovereign, plainly manifested in the creation of four Tory peers, after the last prorogation of Parliament. * This had proved the more alarming, since it had been hinted that an exercise of prerogative in the Upper House was the only means of subverting the opposition of the Lords to the bill.

The discovery of what was called the Scotch plot, however, checked materially the triumph of those who secretly favoured the claims of the Pretender. This famous conspiracy, which had for its object the interests of the Jacobite faction, produced a more effectual change in the sentiments of the Queen, and made her more distrust-

* Somerville, vol. i. p. 48.

ful of her favourite partisans, than all the services of Marlborough, or the laborious and steady duty of Godolphin, or even the able arguments of the Duchess, could possibly have rendered her. Yet, still Anne secretly favoured the high church party; and it was with reluctance that she abstained from giving to the last effort for passing the bill against occasional conformity, her decided countenance.

The measure was introduced by a manœuvre, and it was further designed to carry it by a stratagem. By the contrivance of Lord Nottingham, it was announced in the Gazette, without Lord Godolphin's knowledge or concurrence. * "It was resolved," says the Duchess, "to tack the occasional conformity bill to the money bill, a resolution which showed the spirit of the party in its true light." † The Queen, notwithstanding that the Prince of Denmark had been prevailed upon not to vote on the question, still had her predilections in favour of the measure, greatly to the irritation of the proud spirit which could not overcome those deeply-seated notions.

"I must own to you," observes Anne, writing to the Duchess, "that I never cared to mention anything on this subject to you, because I knew you would not be of my mind; but since you have

* Coxe, p. 295. † Conduct, p. 145.

given me this occasion, I can't forbear saying, that *I see nothing like persecution in this bill.*"

"I am in hopes," she adds, "I shall have one look of you before you go to St. Albans, and therefore will say no more now, but will answer your letter more at large some other time; and only promise my dear Mrs. Freeman, faithfully, I will read the *book* she sent me, and never let difference of opinion hinder us from living together as we used to do. Nothing shall ever alter your poor, unfortunate, faithful Morley, who will live and die, with all truth and tenderness, yours." *

There is every reason to suppose that the opinions of the Duchess upon the subject of nonconformity coincided with those of Bishop Burnet, who was the most energetic champion of the Whigs on this occasion. Dr. Burnet considered that measure as infringing on the principles of toleration which he upheld; he represented it as a design of the Jacobites, to raise such dissensions as might impede the progress of the war. He has declared, in a lively passage of his celebrated history, that it was his resolution never to be silent when the subject should be debated; "for I have looked," he adds, "on liberty of conscience as one of the rights of human nature,

* Conduct, p. 156.

antecedent to society, which no man can give up, because it was not in his own power: and our Saviour's rule, of doing as we would be done by, seemed to be a very express decision to all men who would lay the matter home to their own conscience, and judge as they would willingly be judged by others."*

It would be agreeable to conclude that the Duchess of Marlborough acted on principles as high as those which the bishop here maintains. But it must be allowed that her general conduct would not induce the supposition. The cherished satisfaction of triumphing over her political adversaries, and of exhibiting the Queen enchained under her influence, if not convinced by her arguments, must be regarded as the source of the steady warfare which she maintained against the predilections of her sovereign.

Anne wrote in a strain of humility, which proceeded from the politeness natural to her, and which impelled her to support the assumed character of an equal, even when the prejudices of the two friends came into collision, had ignited, and caused an explosion.

"I am sure," she writes, "nobody shall endeavour more to promote it (union) than your poor, unfortunate, faithful Morley, *who doth not*

* Burnet, vol. v. p. 157.

at all doubt of your truth and sincerity to her, and hopes *her not agreeing in everything you say* will not be imputed to want of value, esteem, or tender kindness for my dear Mrs. Freeman, it being impossible for anybody to be more sincerely another's than I am yours.

"I am very sorry you should forbear writing upon the apprehension of your letters being troublesome, *since you know very well they are not, nor ever can be so*, but the contrary, to your poor, unfortunate, faithful Morley. Upon what my dear Mrs. Freeman says again concerning the address, I have looked it over again, and cannot for my life see one can put any other interpretation upon that word *pressures*, than what I have done already. As to my saying the church was in some danger in the late reign, I cannot alter my opinion; for though there was no violent thing done, everybody that will speak impartially must own that everything was leaning towards the Whigs, *and whenever that is, I shall think the church beginning to be in danger.*" *

The bill was again, by a large majority, rejected, and the Queen and Prince George became, in consequence, extremely unpopular with the high church party, for the coolness with which

* Conduct.

they had abstained from using their influence on this second occasion.*

But the triumph of the Whig party was now fast approaching. Marlborough, after passing the winter in military preparations proportioned to the public danger, had, as we have seen, embarked for Holland; "but few," says Cunningham, "perceived that England was about to unite her forces to those of Germany."

The progress of the great general through the territories of Cologne to Colburg, where he left a camp; his march up the Rhine, on which he carried his sick and wearied in boats between the two armies, marching on either side of the "abounding river;" his encampment on a vast plain, beyond Andernach, and his rapid progress to the Danube, are events which demand almost a separate and distinct history, to relate them as they merit. It was in this campaign that the gallant Eugene passed high compliments on the spirit and deportment of the British army, and requested to serve under the illustrious Marlborough as a volunteer. It was here that the mutual partiality of these two brave men began, and that a friendship was contracted between them, which proved no less delightful to them-

* Burnet.

selves than important to the interests of the war.

The march of the allied troops to Schellenberg, and the encampment around its church, on a hill, commanding a plain, bounded by the Danube, followed this memorable meeting. The battle of Blenheim, which annihilated the ascendency of France, was the glorious climax of a series of less important, yet brilliant engagements. It destroyed, at the same time, the influence of that party in our own country, who had prophesied, not many weeks before the important victory, that all would end fatally for Holland and for England. Sir Edward Seymour, the leader of the opposition in the House of Commons, inveighed against Marlborough, before the decisive action, and whilst he lay before Schellenberg, in the bitterest terms, and even threatened the Duke with a severe censure of Parliament for marching his army to the Danube.

Nor was the arrogant but able Seymour a solitary railer against the great deliverer of his country. There was a host of malcontents who accused Marlborough of exceeding his commission, and of consulting his private interests in the steps which he had taken; and a clamour was raised, that the British army was led away to

slaughter, in order to serve the purposes of a single individual.

The Duchess, in her narrative, refers to the battle of Blenheim in one short paragraph only, and that in reference to its effect upon the state of politics in England.

"The church, in the meanwhile, it must be confessed," she writes, "was in a deplorable condition,—the Earls of Rochester, Jersey, and Nottingham, and the Whigs, coming into favour." Great were the exertions used to reanimate the party, and also to resume the great measure against non-conformists. "But it happened," says the Duchess, "that my Lord Marlborough, in the summer before the Parliament met, gained the battle of Blenheim. This was an unfortunate accident; and, by the visible dissatisfaction of some people on the news of it, one would have imagined that, instead of beating the French, he had beat the church."

It might be supposed that, from this cool and almost flippant mention of an event in which her warmest affections ought to have been interested, the Duchess was an indifferent witness of those stirring and important scenes in which John Duke of Marlborough played a conspicuous part, and in which all Europe, figuratively speaking, participated. But, what-

ever were her failings, the unpardonable fault of not appreciating *him*; of not sharing in his lofty hopes nor suffering in his anxieties; of not prizing his safety, of not being elevated with an honest pride at his success,—so great a deficiency in all that is healthy in moral or intellectual condition, could not be imputed to this haughty and capricious, but not heartless, woman. Yet, notwithstanding this vindication of the Duchess's character, she had parted from her husband (will it be believed?) in anger. Amid the dangers and difficulties to which Marlborough was exposed, he carried with him the remembrance of other annoyances, which, whilst it neither abated his ardour nor weakened his exertions for the great cause, added to the pressure of a mind overcharged, and of faculties overtasked, a sense of chagrin which must have aggravated every other care.

The stings which domestic quarrels always inflict, and which sometimes can never, by any gentle arts, be removed, were still poignant when the Duke quitted England for the Hague. Repentance in violent but generous tempers quickly succeeds the indulgence of the angry taunt, or bitter sarcasm; and when absence had cooled down those ebullitions of irritability, which wanted, perhaps, the accustomed object to vent themselves upon, the Duchess appears to have suffered her

better feelings to prevail, and to have experienced sincere regret that she had parted unkindly, and perhaps for ever, from him whose life was now exposed to every possible risk, whilst she sat at home in safety. Her restless, but not callous mind began to be possessed with nobler resolutions than, as it seems from his reply, the Duke ever anticipated from his wife. Soon after his departure, she wrote to offer to join him, to share in the anxieties, and even in the dangers, to which he was exposed. To accede to the request was impracticable; but it gratified the warm and generous heart of Marlborough to know that the Duchess, of whose affection he seems never to have been fully assured, should wish to resign for him the attractions of ease and safety, and the luxuries of home. His letter to her, in reply to this offer, is too beautiful to be abridged.*

"*Hague, April* 24—*May* 5.

"Your letter of the 15th came to me but this minute. My Lord Treasurer's letter, in which it was enclosed, by some mistake was sent to Amsterdam. I would not for anything in my power it had been lost; for it is so very kind, that I would in return lose a thousand lives, if I had them, to make you happy. Before I sat down to

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 239.

write this letter, I took yours that you wrote at Harwich out of my strong box, and have burnt it; but, if you will give me leave, it will be a great pleasure to me to have it in my power to read this dear, dear letter often, and that it may be found in my strong box when I am dead. I do this minute love you better than I ever did in my life before. This letter of yours has made me so happy, that I do from my soul wish we could retire, and not be blamed. What you propose as to coming over, I should be extremely pleased with; for your letter has so transported me, that I think you would be happier in being here than where you are; although I should not be able to see you often. But you will see, by my last letter as well as this, that what you desire is impossible, for I am going up into Germany, where it would be impossible for you to follow me; but love me as you do now, and no hurt can follow me. You have by this kindness preserved my quiet, and I believe my life; for, till I had this letter, I have been very indifferent of what should become of myself. I have pressed this business of carrying an army into Germany, in order to leave a good name behind me, wishing for nothing else but good success. I shall now add that of having a long life, that I may be happy with you."

Upon the entreaty being renewed in the summer, Marlborough again refused;* for he was at that time on his march to the Danube, and, in case of an unfortunate issue to his projects, he had no place, as he assured the Duchess, to which he could send her for safety.

"I take it extremely kind," he writes, "that you persist in desiring to come to me; but I am sure, when you consider that three days hence will be a month, and that we shall be a fortnight longer before we shall get to the Danube, so that you could hardly get to me, and back again to Holland, before it would be time to return to England. Besides, my dear soul, how could I be at ease? for if we should not have good success, I could not put you in any place where you could be safe."†

The courageous character of the Duchess was fully requisite to sustain her during the events of the ensuing months of this memorable summer. August drew on, and the crisis of the war approached. We know not how she was supported through anxieties multiplied by rumour, and embittered by the slanderous accusations of the envious; but the Duke her husband had one resource, which never failed—he trusted in Providence. Whilst weaker minds vainly confide in their

* Cox, vol. i. p. 246. † Ibid.

own strength, or in the effect of circumstances, which are as reeds driven to and fro by a mighty wind, the great Marlborough, humbling himself before his supreme Creator, had recourse to prayer. Previous to the engagement which crowned his fame, he received the holy sacrament, and "devoted himself to the Almighty Ruler, and Lord of Hosts," whom it might please to sustain him in the hour of battle, or to receive him into everlasting peace if he fell.* There are those who will justly think that the pious ordinances of our religion were profaned by the cause of bloodshed; and that an all-merciful Father would look down with displeasure upon the deliberate destruction of thousands, even when projected with the purest and most patriotic motives. The better sense of our own peaceful times has brought us to a due conviction of the wickedness of all war not defensive: that in which Marlborough was engaged may, nevertheless, be considered to have borne that character.

When the great victory was won, Marlborough's first thoughts were of the Queen, of the people, of his wife. After a battle which lasted five hours, having been himself sixteen hours on horseback, and whilst still in pursuit of the

* Lediard, vol. i. p. 365.

enemy, Marlborough tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and with a black-lead pencil wrote these hasty lines:

"*August* 13, 1704.

"I have not time to say more, but to beg you will give my duty to the Queen, and let her know that her army has had a glorious victory. M. Tallard and the other generals are in my coach,† and I am following the rest. The bearer, my aide-de-camp, will give her an account of what has passed. I shall do it in a day or two by another more at large.

"MARLBOROUGH."

The battle of Blenheim silenced everything but acclamations of joy and gratitude. The Duke, after various other successes, returned to England on the fourteenth of December, 1704, worn out with hardships, rather than elated with success. Throughout the whole of the campaign, his coolness had been combined with an ardent courage, which never lost sight, for an instant, of the interests of humanity, in so far as the great lessons of forbearance handed down to us can be united with the profession of arms. His modesty, as he returned, bringing with him as a prisoner

* As prisoners.

the famous Marshal Tallard, was no less remarkable. Abroad, he was treated as a prince, and he consented to wear the character for the benefit of that cause which he espoused, and for the honour of those allies whom he represented; but, on returning home, Marlborough became again the subject, the least obtrusive of men; and, "in point of courtesy," on an equal footing with the lowest in England. *

This note was written on a slip of paper torn from a memorandum-book; it had probably been taken from some commissary's bill, as it was written, along with the important intelligence, on a list of tavern expenses, and an entry of bread furnished to the troops. The precious despatch is preserved in the archives of Blenheim. Colonel Parker, who carried it to the Queen, requested, instead of the usual donation of five hundred pounds, to be honoured by the gift of her Majesty's picture. The Queen granted the permission, and presented him with her miniature; and the gallant officer chose to be represented himself, by the pencil of Kneller, as wearing the miniature, with the despatch in his hand, and the battle in the back-ground. †

After innumerable honours paid to the vic-

* Cunningham, b. vii. p. 402.

† Coxe, vol. i. p. 306.

torious general, and, among others, a combat of wild beasts for his entertainment at Berlin,* the Duke was able to return to his home, where all his real happiness was centered. He had owned, in one of his letters from Weissemberg, that his heart ached at the anticipation of a journey of eight hundred miles, before he could reach the Hague: and innumerable obstacles delayed his return until the fourth of December, when the wearied general sailed up the Thames in one of the royal yachts, landed at Whitehall stairs, and proceeded the same afternoon to St. James's, where he was graciously received by the Queen and Prince George.† The French prisoners, whom he was said by his political enemies to have brought for the purpose of adorning his triumph, were sent to Nottingham, for the ministry did not venture to trust these foreigners at Oxford this year; a singular, and as some persons thought, an indecorous respect and attention having been shown two years before, by the Oxonians, to some French prisoners of war who were quartered in their city.‡

This was a proud era in the life of the Duchess of Marlborough. The year 1705 began with splendid processions, in which she and her hus-

* Lediard. † Ibid. ‡ Cunningham, p. 402.

band acted a conspicuous part. On the third of January the trophies reaped in the battle of Blenheim were removed from their first place of deposit, the Tower, to Westminster Hall. Companies of horse and foot guards led the way; persons of rank were intermixed with the troops, and a hundred and twenty-eight pikemen, each bearing a standard, closed the triumphal procession. The Queen viewed the whole from the windows of the Lord Fitzharding's lodgings in the palace, attended by her favourite, who heard, in the triumphant acclamations of the excited multitude, signals of destruction, ominous not only to our foreign foes, but presaging the downfal of political party opposed to her at home.

A grand entertainment at the city, in the Goldsmiths'-hall, succeeded this interesting display. Marlborough was conveyed to the banquet in one of the royal carriages, and gazed upon with curiosity and enthusiasm by the multitude. At Templebar he was received by the city marshals with the usual ceremonies.*

On the eleventh of the same month, the House of Commons unanimously agreed to send up an address to the Queen, humbly desiring that she would graciously be pleased to consider of some proper means to perpetuate the

* History of Europe. Lediard. Coxe.

memory of those services which had been performed by the Duke of Marlborough.*

The Queen, having returned an answer that she would give the subject her consideration, on the seventeenth sent a message to the House, acquainting the members that she did incline to grant the interest of the crown in the honour and manor of Woodstock, and hundred of Wootton, to the Duke of Marlborough and his heirs; and desired the assistance of the House on this extraordinary occasion.

The lieutenancy and rangerships of the Park of Woodstock and Wootton, with the rent and profits of the manor and hundreds, having been already granted for two lives, her Majesty thought proper that the encumbrance should be cleared.

In compliance with her Majesty's wishes, a bill was immediately brought in and passed, enabling her to carry into effect both these propositions; and the ancient royal domain of Woodstock, under the illustrious name of Blenheim, became the possession of the Duke of Marlborough and his heirs, upon the tribute of "a standard, or colours, with three flowers-de-luce painted on them, for all manner of rent, services," &c., to be presented

* History of Europe. Lediard. Coxe.

annually, on the second of August, to the Queen, her heirs and successors.*

This munificent reward was increased soon afterwards by an order from the Queen to the Board of Works, to build, at the royal expense, a palace, which was to be entitled the Castle of Blenheim. A model of this edifice was framed for the approbation of the Queen, and the work begun under the superintendence of the celebrated John Vanburgh, then considered to be one of the most able architects of his time.

The important results of the battle of Blenheim could not be disputed, even by the bitterest enemies of Marlborough. The French, on their part, attached such direful effects on their country to this victory, that a proclamation was published in France, making it unlawful to speak of it;† nor could its consequences be concealed from those who would have been most desirous not to perceive them. "The power of France was," says the Duchess, "broken by it to a great degree, and the liberties and peace of Europe were in a fair way to be established on firm and lasting foundations."‡ Yet scandalous reports were, nevertheless, circulated respecting Marlborough, and the ungrateful world scrupled not still to

* Lediard, p. 478. † Cunningham, book viii. p. 442.
‡ Conduct, p. 147.

say that he carried on the war for his own private advantage, more especially for the accumulation of wealth, to which he was generally supposed to be addicted. But the Duke, although invited by his friends to spend more freely the vast fortune which he was yearly accumulating, adhered to those habits of frugality for which he had been remarkable even in his youth, and which, evincing an orderly mind, may be supposed to have conduced to the success of his plans through life.

CHAPTER III.

Complete triumph of the Whigs—Attempts made to bring Lord Sunderland into the Cabinet—Scheme for insuring the Hanoverian succession—The Queen's resentment at that measure.—1705.

THE gradual removal of the Tory party from the offices of state followed the brilliant successes of the Duke's arms. The privy seal was taken from the Duke of Buckingham; and the Duchess also prevailed on the Queen to remove from his office Sir Nathan Wright, Lord Chancellor, a man who was obnoxious to all parties, and of "no use to the Crown." The celebrated Lord Cowper, distinguished for his abilities and integrity, was appointed his successor.

Lord Somers, "seeing," says Cunningham, "that the Whigs were now united to the court, and fearing lest the principles of our ancestors should be subverted," retired from all public em-

ployments; yet still his powerful mind swayed one of a less solid character. Lord Sunderland, an able, but violent, and unpopular man, who would listen to no arguments but to those of Somers, being in the prime of life, and a man of great vigilance and activity,* was considered by the more determined Whigs, and by the Duchess of Marlborough in particular, as qualified to play a leading part in the royal councils. His opinions were no less objectionable to the nation in general than to the Queen in particular; and she long resisted the persuasions of her favourite, as well as of the ministry, now wholly Whig, to appoint this nobleman one of her secretaries of state in the room of Sir Charles Hedges. The point was yet undecided, when a measure was adopted by the Tory faction, which drove her Majesty to the resolution of throwing herself entirely into the hands of the Whigs.

After the bill against occasional conformity had repeatedly failed, a new scheme was, as it were in desperation, suggested. The parliament, which met in 1705, proved to be chiefly composed of Whigs, or of those moderate and skilful politicians, to whom it was convenient to appear to belong to that party. It was now that a plan was formed for inviting into England the Princess

* Lediard. Cunningham.

Sophia, Electress Dowager of Hanover, on whom the succession of the crown had been already settled.

Different motives have been ascribed for the origin of this proceeding. The Queen's private feelings were vehemently opposed to such a measure. Nothing could offend her more than any great degree of respect offered to her successor; and her good wishes were with sufficient reason supposed really to centre in another quarter. The kindly-tempered Anne had never forgotten that she had involuntarily injured her brother. The Hanoverian succession could not, therefore, be secured with any hope of pleasing her; and it was supposed rather to be a snare to her ministry, who, if they promoted it, would incur for ever the royal displeasure. The Duchess of Marlborough, observing in which direction her mistress's affections lay, nevertheless had repeatedly urged her to invite over the Electress, or, at any rate, the young Prince of Hanover, afterwards George the First, in order that he might live in this country as her son; but to this proposal her Majesty never would listen for an instant.*

The party who brought this measure into parliament, headed by Lord Rochester and Lord Nottingham, neither expected, nor even wished,

* Conduct, p. 156.

it was said, to carry their motion, but either to embroil the Whigs with the Queen, or to draw the enmity of the bulk of the nation upon that party for opposing the scheme; for the Electress, although a Lutheran, was regarded as the protectress of the Protestant church; and the safety of the church was at that time dearer to the populace of England than any other political consideration whatsoever.

The stratagem, for such it must be considered, failed entirely. It did more, it raised the Whigs to a height, which, but for the infatuation of their enemies, they would never, during the reign of Anne, have attained. Notwithstanding that, in voting against the invitation to the Electress, they departed from their principles, the Whigs, upon the plea that the measure was "neither safe nor reasonable," contrived to keep their credit with the nation. They were split, nevertheless, into factions, upon this delicate subject; but those who were termed "Court Whigs" were zealous in their opposition to the proposed invitation.*

"I know, indeed," says the Duchess, "that my Lord Godolphin, and other great men, were much reflected upon by some well-disposed persons, for not laying hold of this opportunity,

* Conduct, p. 150.

which the Tories put into their hands, of more effectually securing the succession to the crown in the House of Hanover. But those of the Whigs whose anger against the minister was raised on this account, little knew how impracticable the project of invitation was, and that the attempt would have only served to make the Queen discard her ministry, to the ruin of the common cause of these kingdoms, and of all Europe. I had often tried her Majesty upon this subject; and when I found that she would not hear of the immediate successor coming over, had pressed her that she would at least invite hither the young Prince of Hanover, who was not to be her immediate successor, and that she would let him live here as her son; but her Majesty would listen to no proposal of this kind in any shape whatever."

The Queen, upon this occasion, gave the first indications of anything like a real reconciliation to the Whig party.* Those in the houses of parliament, and there were many, who were zealously attached to the Pretender, and abjured him only in order better to serve him,† were infinitely less obnoxious to her than the politicians who dared to propose planting her extolled successor perpetually before her eyes. Stronger

* Conduct, p. 155. † Cunningham, p. 456.

minds than that which Anne possessed would have shrunk from such a trial of temper. She was childless, and no longer young; and perhaps the determination manifested by this proposal to ruin the hopes of her nephew aggravated her resentment. Her self-love was deeply wounded. For though she was not, even then, as the Duchess expressed it, inwardly converted to the Whigs, neither by all that her favourite had been able to say, nor even "by the mad conduct of the tacking Tories," to repeat language which must be readily appropriated by those who know the Duchess's style,—yet their conduct in the *invitation* occasioned a change in her sentiments, which an insult from one whom she had formerly regarded with kindly prepossessions completed.

"She had been present," says the Duchess, "at the debates in the House of Lords upon that subject, and had heard the Duke of Buckingham treat her with great disrespect, urging, as an argument for inviting over the Princess Sophia, that the Queen might live till she did not know what she did, and be like a child in the hands of others; and a great deal to the same effect. Such rude treatment from the Tories, and the zeal and success of the Whigs in opposing a motion so extremely disagreeable to her, occasioned her to write to me in the following terms."

"I believe dear Mrs. Freeman and I shall not disagree as we have formerly done; for I am sensible of the services those people have done me, that you have a good opinion of, and will countenance them, and am thoroughly convinced of the malice and insolence of *them* you have always been speaking against."

The insolent remark of Buckingham was armed with a sting which few females could endure with composure. The Electress Sophia, who was to be the safeguard of the people in Anne's dotage, was seventy-six years of age. The Queen had gone to the gallery of the house with a far different expectation than that of hearing observations so calculated to wound her nicest feelings. She had hoped by her presence to restrain the violence of language, which she had on a former occasion checked by her royal presence; but she had not expected that the heat of argument would be mingled up with insinuations so audacious, which, though pointed at the Duchess of Marlborough, were most insulting to herself. She had indulged a desire to hear this celebrated argument, and to judge in person who were most her friends on this occasion; and she was painfully chastised for her curiosity.* This, and other circumstances, pro-

* See Conduct. Somerville, chap. vi. p. 113.

duced that acknowledgment which the "dear Mrs. Freeman," to whom it was addressed, treasured up and reported.*

The Whigs lost both character and consistency, whilst they gained court favour, by their opposition to the "invitation" projected. The appointment of Lord Sunderland, so earnestly desired by the Duchess in opposition to her husband, was not calculated to recover their popularity. When it did take place, the event justified the predictions of his enemies, and the apprehensions of his friends. It was not long before he began to dictate to the poor Queen, who was tolerably inured to that sort of treatment, but who did not expect it from his lordship. He raised contentions among the nobility, and disgraced himself and his station by an indifference to moral character in those whom he took to be his associates. The old Whigs, Lord Somers among them, predicted that grievous confusion would accrue in consequence of the boldness and inexperience of this rash and scheming politician.†

There was another young satellite of the Lord Treasurer's, whom the old-fashioned Whigs dreaded and detested. This was Mr. James

* Conduct, p. 159.

† Cunningham, p. 458.

Craggs, an early favourite of the Duke of Marlborough, and now a rising star on the political hemisphere. But Harley stood on a more firm footing than any of the courtiers who dreaded, or who flattered, the still powerful Duchess of Marlborough. Her influence and her arrogance were now at their climax. It is said that, with one glance of her eye, she banished from the royal presence a Scottish gentleman, Mr. James Johnson, who came to Hampton Court to treat with the Queen on the affairs of his country.* And, indeed, Harley in vain endeavoured to ingratiate himself in her favour. He dreaded the violent temper and influence of that "busy woman," as she was called; he knew that it had been exercised to the ruin of others, and that it might affect his prospects.

Few persons understood the art of adapting his conversation to certain ends so well as the discerning, artful, and accomplished Harley; few persons better understood the value of appearances. Although educated in the Presbyterian faith, he carefully avoided an exclusive preference to sectarianism, as a barrier to political advancement; and, piqued at the indifference of the liberal party which he had originally espoused, he adhered to that which was most likely to insure lasting popularity—the high church party. Essen-

* Cunningham.

tially a worldly man, Harley, nevertheless, failed not to have a clergyman at his dinner-table every Sunday, and, with characteristic temporising, selected his weekly clerical visitants alternately from the Episcopalian and Presbyterian faith,*— his family generally following the latter persuasion. It was Harley's unsuccessful aim, at this time, to ingratiate himself with the Duchess of Marlborough, and to gain her over to his interests. Deeply versed in literature, and a patron of learning, it might have been supposed that the lettered, the polite, the liberal Harley, could have found means to gain the good-will of one who knew well how to estimate his talents, and to prize the deference which he paid to her ascendant star. The Duchess, however, was not to be blinded or misled by flattery, which she expected as her due, and which she did not think entitled to any degree of gratitude on her part. To all Harley's civilities she could scarcely be prevailed upon to return a civil answer.† The "diverting stories of the town," with which he afterwards solaced the Queen's retirement, when Mrs. Masham had superseded the lofty Sarah,‡ were condemned to remain untold, whilst the Duchess frowned on all he said. "She had an

* Lediard, vol. iii. † Cunningham, b. viii. p. 461.
‡ Lediard, vol. ii. p. 3.

aversion to him," says a contemporary historian, "and with a haughty air despised all that gentleman's civilities, though he had never discontinued his endeavours, by the most obliging efforts, and all the good offices in his power, to gain her friendship; but she, without any concern, rode all about the town triumphant; sometimes to one lady, sometimes to another; and sometimes she would visit Lord Halifax, who, in compliance with the humour of the times, was wont to appease that lady's spirit with concerts of music, and poems, and private suppers, and entertainments, for all of which he was well qualified by the natural ease and politeness of his manners."*

The causes of the Duchess's aversion to Harley are fully disclosed in her "Vindication." The minister who afterwards effected her downfal had been promoted by Marlborough and Godolphin, who often saw with different eyes to those with which the Duchess viewed the map which lay before her, and on which she traced her future course. Her penetrating glance detected the deep art, the well-digested designs which lay beneath the moderation and civility of Harley. But she had a more particular source of enmity towards Harley, which was that minister's

* Cunningham, p. 452.

patronage of Sir Charles Hedges, into whose post it was her design, or rather determination, to introduce her son-in-law Sunderland. The Queen had a reluctance to part with Sir Charles Hedges, and was assisted by Harley in raising obstacles to the change in the cabinet which the Duchess desired. The predominating Whig party aided the Duchess, and, as she relates, "after the services they had done, and the assurances the Queen had given them, thought it reasonable to expect that one of the secretaries at least should be such a man as they could place a confidence in. They believed," adds the Duchess, "they might trust my Lord Sunderland; and though they did not think him the properest man for the post, yet, being my Lord Marlborough's son-in-law, they chose to recommend him to her Majesty, because, as they expressed themselves to me, they imagined it was *driving the nail that would go.*"*

Marlborough and Godolphin, notwithstanding the near connexion of both with Lord Sunderland, were adverse, nevertheless, to his appointment. Sunderland was not only conceited and headstrong, but he was unpopular from a rash and unbecoming practice of running down Britain, its customs and institutions, laws and rights,

* Conduct, p. 161. Cunningham. Lediard.

and maintaining the superiority of other countries. The manners of this young nobleman were harsh, and his temper ungovernable. He was little adapted to conciliate the favour of a female sovereign; more especially when he came forward in direct contrast with the bland and accessible Harley, who did not consider it beneath him to promote courtly gossip for the Queen's amusement. The Duchess, however, with less judgment than might have been expected, urged strongly and incessantly the appointment of her son-in-law; and was astonished that the Queen should be reluctant to promote the son-in-law of Marlborough, the hero not only of Blenheim, but of Ramilies, where a victory was gained whilst yet this matter was in suspense.* She urged her Majesty by letter not to think that she could continue to carry on the government with so much partiality to "one sort of men, and so much discouragement to others."

The Queen, it seems, had taken some offence at the freedom of a former letter, for the Duchess thus expostulated with her Majesty in reference to that epistle.†

"By the letter I had from your Majesty this morning, and the great weight you put upon the difference betwixt the word notion and nation in

* Conduct, p. 170. † Ibid. p. 165—167.

my letter, I am only made sensible (as by many other things) that you were in a great disposition to complain of me, since to this moment I cannot for my life see any essential difference betwixt those two words as to the sense of my letter, the true meaning of which was only to let your Majesty know, with that faithfulness and concern which I ever had for your service, that it was not possible for you to carry on your government much longer with so much partiality to one sort of men, though they lose no occasion of disserving you, and of showing the greatest inveteracy against my Lord Marlborough and my Lord Treasurer; and so much discouragement to others, who, even after great disobligations, have taken several opportunities to show their firmness to your Majesty's interest, and their zeal to support you."

She proceeded to point out to the Queen, that if the Lord Treasurer and Marlborough found it impossible to carry on the government, and were to retire from it, her Majesty would find herself in the hands of a very violent party, who, she declared, would have "very little mercy," or "even humanity," for her Majesty.

The result proved the truth of this prediction; and when, some years afterwards, the Queen, harassed and intimidated by turns, sank under

the pressure, not of public business, but of party rancour, the value and good sense of the Duchess's warnings became manifest.

"Whereas," adds the plain-spoken favourite, "you might prevent all these misfortunes by giving my Lord Treasurer and my Lord Marlborough (whom you may so safely trust) leave to propose those things to you which they know and can judge to be absolutely necessary for your service, which will put it in their power to influence those who have given you proofs both of their being able to serve you, and of their desiring to make you great and happy. But rather than your Majesty will employ a party-man, as you are pleased to call Lord Sunderland, you will put all things in confusion; and at the same time that you say this, you employ Sir C. Hedges, who is against you, only that he has voted in remarkable things, that he might keep his place; and he did so in the last King's time, till at last, when everybody saw that he was dying, and he could lose nothing by differing with that court; but formerly he voted with those men, the enemies to the government, called Whigs; and if he had not been a party-man, how could he have been a secretary of state, when all your councils were influenced by my Lord Rochester, Lord Nott, Sir Edward Seymour, and about six or

seven just such men, that call themselves *the heroes of the church?*"

The anathemas of the Duchess were not without effect. Sir Charles Hedges, dismayed at the vigorous opposition set up against him, deemed it, eventually, more prudent to retire, than to be turned out of his post; and, in the winter of 1706, Lord Sunderland was appointed to succeed him.*

Queen Anne had now thrown herself, to all appearance, wholly into the hands of the Whig party, who, from her childhood, had appeared to her to be her natural enemies. Yet still she cherished a secret partiality to her early counsellors, and exhibited a reluctance to consult with her ministers on any promotions in the church.

"The first artifice of those counsellors was," says the Duchess,† "to instil into the Queen notions of the *high prerogative* of *acting without her ministers*, and, as they expressed it, of being Queen *indeed*. And the nomination of persons to bishoprics, against the judgment and *remonstrances* of her ministers, being what they knew her genius would fall in with more readily than with anything else they could propose, they began with that; and they took care that those *remonstrances* should be interpreted by the world,

* Conduct, p. 173. † Ibid. p. 174.

and presented by herself, as hard usage, a denial of common civility, and even *the making her no* Queen." Such is the account given by this violent partisan of the secret power by which her friends were finally vanquished.

To operate on her Majesty's fears, and to gain popularity among a numerous portion of the people who deemed the Whigs inimical to the church establishment, an outcry was raised that the church was in danger. Marlborough and Godolphin were regarded as deserters from the great cause, and the press was employed in attacking the low church party, in terms both unscrupulous and indelicate.

That celebrated libel, entitled, " The Memorial of the Church of England," the author of which has been already specified, was published at this critical juncture; " a doleful piece," as the Duchess calls it, " penned by some of the zealots of the party." This was among the first and most scurrilous efforts of those who hoped by invective and slander to produce a deep impression on the public mind. It was dedicated to the Duke of Marlborough, as being considered still the strength of a party which he had not explicitly renounced: and was forwarded to him in the midst of his campaign on the Ische. To his great mind the aspersions of the anony-

mous party were too contemptible to merit a moment's serious indignation. The vehemence of passionate indignation is, on such occasions, the ebullition of minds of an inferior stamp. The injustice and invective which scarcely drew forth an angry exclamation from Marlborough, produced a feverish heat in the warm temperament of the Duchess.

"In this camp," writes the Duke to Lord Godolphin, his bosom friend and confidant,* "I have had time to read the pamphlet called 'The Memorial of the Church of England.' I think it the most impudent and scurrilous thing I ever read. If the author can be found, I do not doubt but he will be punished; for if such liberties may be taken, of writing scandalous lies without being punished, no government can stand long. Notwithstanding what I have said, I cannot forbear laughing when I think they would have you and I pass for fanatics, and the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Jersey for pillars of the church; the one being a Roman Catholic in King James's reign, and the other would have been a Quaker, or any other religion that would have pleased the late King."

To the Duchess he calmly writes:—

* Coxe, p. 515.

" Tirlemont, Sept. 7.

" I received last night a letter from you without date, by which I see there is another scurrilous pamphlet come out. The best way of putting an end to that villany is not to appear concerned. The best of men and women, in all ages, have been ill used. If we can be so happy as to behave ourselves so as to have no reason to reproach ourselves, we may then despise what rage and faction do."

This wise and dignified mode of receiving attacks to which eminent individuals have in every age been exposed, was succeeded by the exposure and punishment of the scurrilous writer.

Of that event, with its painful circumstances, a detailed account has already been given in the preceding volume.

CHAPTER IV.

Decline of the Duchess's influence—Her attempt in favour of Lord Cowper—Singular Letter from Anne in explanation—Intrigues of the Tories—Harley's endeavours to stimulate the Queen to independence.—1706.

UNTIL the period on which we are now entering, the influence of the Duchess of Marlborough over the mind of her sovereign was not visibly impaired, by her own indiscretion, or by the arts of her opponents. Yet those differences of opinion which disturbed the singular friendship of Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Morley, and of which advantage was finally taken by the enemies of the Duchess to effect a total alienation between her Majesty and her former favourite, continued, and were, according to her fashion, stoutly contested by the Duchess.

On one important point the Duchess addressed

her Majesty with considerable earnestness. Lord Cowper, whose friendship was an honour which the Duchess fully appreciated, was at this time Lord Keeper;* and it was the endeavour of the Duchess to throw into his hands that patronage in the church which, she rightly deemed, he would exercise conscientiously and judiciously. But it was in vain that she urged the Queen to allow Lord Cowper to fill up various livings belonging to the crown, which had now for some time been vacant, and of which Anne delayed to dispose. She addressed a remonstrance to her Majesty, representing how safely she might place power in the hands of Lord Cowper. The Queen returned a kind but unsatisfactory reply; and the tone in which it was conveyed betrayed plainly the incipient coolness which had commenced between Anne and her viceroy.

After apologising for the interval which had elapsed before she had answered the Duchess's letter,—a delay for which Anne accounted by the frivolous reason, that not having time to answer it "before supper," it was not very "easy to her to do so after supper,"—the Queen, whilst assuring Mrs. Freeman that she had a firm reliance on the equity and judgment of Lord Cowper, ob-

* He was made Lord Keeper in 1705, and Lord Chancellor in 1707.

serves, " that in her opinion the crown can never have too many livings at its own disposal; and, therefore," she adds, " though there may be some trouble in it, it is a power I can never think it reasonable to part with, and I hope those that come after me will think the same."

" You wrong me much," continues Anne, " in thinking I am influenced by some you mention in disposing of church preferments. Ask those whom I am sure you will believe, though you won't me, and they can tell you I never disposed of any without advising with them, and that I have preferred more people upon other recommendations than I have upon his that you fancy to have so much power with me." With the assurance that there would soon be " more changes," and with the further declaration, to use the Queen's own words, " that in a little time Mr. Morley and *me* shall redeem our credit with Mrs. Freeman," the Queen, under the humble signature not yet abandoned, of " your poor, unfortunate, faithful Morley,"* closes this explanation: — a singular reply, manifesting that the royal composer of the letter was now weary of that subjection from which she emancipated herself only to fall into other snares; but

* MSS. Letters British Museum, Coxe Papers, 45, 4to. p. 2.

that she wanted courage, though not inclination, to throw off the yoke.

The scheme projected by the Tories, of bringing over the Electress Sophia into this country, had not only failed, as we have seen, but had thrown the game entirely into the hands of their opponents. The Queen, irritated beyond her usual custom, wrote, in the hurry of the moment, in such terms to her favourite as to authorise the expectation that her resentment against the Tories would not quickly subside.

The reasons for Anne's displeasure continued in force until they were superseded by others, equally feminine, arising in the royal mind of the timid, prejudiced, and ill-judging Anne, which renewed her innate dislike towards the opposite faction. The decline of the Whig party was arrested this year by the victory of Ramilies, on which occasion the Queen wrote to Marlborough, assuring him "that she wanted words to express the true sense she had of the great service he had done his country and her in that great and glorious victory, and hoped it would be a means to confirm all good and honest people in their principles, and frighten others from being troublesome;"—"and *then spoke*," adds the Duchess of Marlborough, "of the alloy it was to all her

satisfaction, to consider what hazards he was exposed to, and repeated an obliging request she had often made, that he would be careful of himself."* "I cannot doubt," adds the narrator of this gracious message, "of the Queen's kind disposition to my Lord Marlborough at this time, or of her willingness to oblige him."

The recent introduction of Lord Sunderland to office soon gave rise, however, to a division in the cabinet. Harley, who was offended at the dismissal of Sir Charles Hedges, was practising upon the Queen's weak mind, and endeavouring to persuade her Majesty to "*go alone*,"—a notion which had been sedulously kept down by the reigning influence, for many years past; or, as the Duchess expresses it, "to instil into the Queen notions of the high prerogative of acting without her ministers—(as she expressed it,) of being Queen indeed." †

The first proof that Anne gave of her profiting by these doctrines, was her appointing certain high church divines to fill two bishoprics. This led several of the Whigs to think themselves betrayed by the ministry; whereas the truth was, that the Queen was secretly under the influence of the Tories, and found it irksome to

* Conduct, p. 171. † Ibid. p. 176.

consult with her ministers on any promotions. The Duke of Marlborough, who, it appears, never lost the respect of his sovereign, represented to the Queen the impropriety of thus acting, and "wrote a very moving letter to her, complaining of the visible loss of his interest with her," and recommending her Majesty, "as the only way to make her government easy, to prefer none of those that appeared to be against her service and the nation's interest."

Notwithstanding the great general's services, it was, however, manifest that his influence, and that of the Duchess, were now, from some cause or other, deeply undermined. The Duke, as well as the Duchess, suffered great vexation from this new and unforeseen apprehension; for it is easy to be happy without tasting power, but difficult indeed to part with it after long possession. It was in the answer to some communications from the Duchess that Marlborough wrote these touching words, betraying all the weariness of worldly anxieties.

"When I writ my last, I was very full of the spleen, and I think with too much reason. My whole time, to the best of my understanding, has been employed for the public good, as I do assure you I do in the presence of God, neglecting no opportunity to let the Queen see what I take

to be her true interest. It is terrible to go through so much uneasiness."*

The state of parties was indeed such, that "every service done to the sovereign, however just and reasonable in its own nature," was, as an author justly observed, "made a job by the minister and his tools."†

The understream of faction was flowing unseen, but deep; and the Duchess was for a time insensible to the sure course which it had taken. She was intoxicated with power. Her enemies, indeed, alleged that she "considered her vicegerency as well established as the royal prerogative; that she might not only recommend a point or person, but insist on either as understood in her grant—as a perquisite of her high office; and that she was privileged to exclude everybody from the royal presence, who had not the happiness of being in her good graces."‡

It is apparent, however, from the letters which passed between Queen Anne and the Duchess, that it was not without continual arguments and remonstrances that the favourite had raised her chosen party to royal favour; and thus maintained, that it was accomplished only by earnest endeavours,

* Conduct, 161. † Other Side, p. 259.
‡ Ibid. p. 261.

and with difficulty. The Duchess, it was more than probable, expected, and sometimes extorted, too much for her friends and adherents. Marlborough truly said, that "both parties were in the wrong."* To his sense of justice, his moderation, and calm observation, the interested views of those who alike professed the highest motives, only affixing different names to their boasted objects, were laid bare by a long experience of courts, and by a deep insight into the minds of men. "The Whigs," it was said, and not without justice, "acted on Swiss principles, and expected to be paid the top price of the market, for coming plump into the measures of the court, at the expense of their former professions."†

The Queen, the nervous Queen, was considered as a mere property, "which was to be engrossed, divided, or transferred, as suited best with the mercenary views of those state-brokers who had the privilege of dividing the spoil."‡

It was not, however, until Harley despaired of achieving the Duchess's favour, that he became her determined, though secret foe. Even after his enmity was in operation, the Duchess might have retrieved her fortune by prudent attention to her royal mistress. She came, however, seldom

* Conduct, p. 162. † Other Side, p. 261.
‡ Cunningham, b. ix. p. 77.

to court, a line of conduct which was considered ill judged on her part; and, when she attended on the Queen, performed her offices of duty, such as holding her Majesty's gloves, with a haughty and contemptuous air, which Anne, who had sunk her own dignity in a degrading familiarity, was constrained to endure, but could not be obliged to forgive.

The court suffered no diminution of gaiety on account of the haughty favourite's absence; for she is said to have long before ceased to look upon any but her own family with respect. Lord Godolphin rejoiced at her remissness on his own account; "for when she was at court, she was always teasing him with womanish quarrels and altercations, or continually troubling him with interruptions in the business of the state; whereas, now the sole direction of the thing was in his own hands."*

Mr. Harley, on the other hand, lost no opportunity of ingratiating himself into the favour of the Queen. Under pretence of business, he obtained access to her Majesty in the evening, and, disclosing matters which had been concealed from the royal ear, he discovered her real sentiments, and, with infinite address, generally contrived to bring her opinions round to his own views. But

* Cunningham, p. 77.

all his efforts would have been unsuccessful without the aid of female ingenuity. Well did Harley know the temper and peculiarities of the woman whom he desired to supplant. Well could he judge the more common-place character of the homely Anne, whose gentle nature could dispense with respect, but could not exist without a friend; and a friend to supply the void in the Queen's heart was soon discovered.

Before the schemes of Harley were ripened, the Duke of Marlborough had returned from the victory of Ramillies, laden with honours. He had received addresses from both Houses of Parliament, who also petitioned the Queen to allow a bill to be brought in to settle the Duke's honours on the male and female issue of his daughters. This favour was obtained; and the manor of Woodstock and Blenheim-house were, after the decease of the Duchess, upon whom they were settled in jointure, entailed in the same manner with the honours. The annuity of five thousand a year from the Post-office, formerly proposed by the Queen, was now granted; and the palace of Blenheim was ordered to be built at the public charge. Harley and St. John, to a profusion of flattery and of good offices, added their advice to the Duke that he would erect this great monument of his glory in a style of transcendent magnificence; but with

what motives these counsels were given, afterwards appeared.*

The Queen had not only received Marlborough graciously, and ordered a triumphal procession for his trophies, but, to please her successful general, or his wife, had appointed a Whig professor, Dr. Potter, to the chair of divinity at Oxford. But this was an expedient, by yielding one small point, to cover a much greater design.†

To aid his schemes, Harley acquired an associate, humble, pliant, needy, and in every way adapted to perform that small work to which an intriguing politician is constrained sometimes to devote a mind professedly and solely embued with the spirit of patriotism, and racked with anxiety for his country's welfare.‡

Abigail Hill, a name rendered famous from the momentous changes which succeeded its introduction to the political world, was the appropriate designation of the lowly, supple, and artful being on whose secret offices Harley relied for the accomplishment of his plans. Mistress Hill at this time held the post of dresser and chamber-woman to her Majesty, an appointment which had been procured for her by the influence of the Duchess of Marlborough, to whom she was related. The

* Cunningham, p. 55, and Biographia Britannica.

† Conduct. ‡ Conduct, p. 177—181.

world assigned certain causes for the pains which that proud favourite had manifested, to place her kinswoman in a post where she might have easy access to the Queen's ear, and obtain her confidence. The Duchess, it was said, was weary of her arduous attendance upon a mistress whom she secretly despised. She had become too proud to perform the subordinate duties of her office, and proposed to relieve herself of some of her cares, by placing one on whom she could entirely depend, as an occasional substitute in the performance of those duties which even habit had not taught her to endure with patience. Since, after the elevation of the Duke, in consequence of the battle of Blenheim, she had become a princess of the empire,* she was supposed to consider herself too elevated to continue those services to which she had been enured, first in the court of the amiable Anne Hyde, then in that of the unhappy Mary of Modena, and since, near her too gracious sovereign, the meek, but dissembling Anne.

According to the Duchess herself, her inauspicious patronage of Mistress Abigail Hill, afterwards the noted Lady Masham, had a more amiable source than that which was ascribed to it by the writers of the day. Lord Bolingbroke says truly, that there are no materials for history that require to be more scrupulously and severely

* Lediard, vol. ii. p. 2.

examined, "than those of the time when the events to be spoken of were in transaction." "In matters of history," he remarks, "we prefer very justly cotemporary authority; and yet cotemporary authors are the most liable to be warped from the straight line of truth, in writing on subjects which have affected them strongly." "Criticism," as he admirably observes, "separates the ore from the dross, and extracts from various authors a series of true history, which could not have been found entire in any one of them, and will command our assent, when it is formed with judgment, and represented with candour."*

In following this rule, we must not only take into account the rumours of the day, but give due weight to those reasons which were assigned by the Duchess, for her endeavours to promote the interests of the humbled and unfortunate Abigail Hill.

The ungrateful kinswoman had been early acquainted with adversity, which was the remote cause of her ultimate greatness. She was the daughter of an eminent Turkey merchant, who became a bankrupt, with the encumbrance of a numerous and unprovided family. Abigail was at one time so reduced, as to enter into the service of Lady Rivers, wife of Sir John Rivers, Bart., of Chafford; and was rescued from her lowly situation

* Letters on the Study of History. Letter IV.

by the charitable offices of the Duchess of Marlborough, to whom she had the good fortune to be related.

The Duchess has left a succinct account of the degree of kindred in which her rival stood to her, and of the manner in which she became acquainted with her destitute condition. It would be impossible to alter the Duchess's narrative into any better language than her own. The unvarnished and uncontradicted statement which she put forth, years after the clamour against her had subsided, is prefaced with the following observations.*

"The story of this lady, as well as of *that gentleman* who was her great adviser and director, is worth the knowledge of posterity, as it will lead them into a sense of the instability of court favour, and of the incurable baseness which some minds are capable of contracting.

"Mrs. Masham," she continues, "was the daughter of one Hill, a merchant in the city, by a sister of my father. Our grandfather, Sir John Jenyns, had two-and-twenty children, by which means the estate of the family, which was reputed to be about four thousand pounds a year, came to be divided into small parcels. Mrs. Hill had only five hundred pounds to her fortune.† Her hus-

* Conduct, p. 176.

† In her letter (supposed to Bishop Burnet) endorsed "An answer to the person that asked what first stuck with

band lived very well for many years, as I have been told, until, turning projector, he brought ruin upon himself and family. But as this was long before I was born, I never knew there were such people in the world till after the Princess Anne was married, and when she lived at the Cockpit; at which time an acquaintance of mine came to me and said, *she believed I did not know that I had relations who were in want*, and she gave me an account of them. When she had finished her story, I answered, *that indeed I had never heard before of any such relations*, and immediately gave her out of my purse ten guineas for their present relief, saying, I would do what I could for them. Afterwards I sent Mrs. Hill more money, and saw her. She told me that her husband was the same relation to Mr. Harley as she was to me, but that he had never done anything for her. I think Mrs. Masham's father and mother did not live long after this. They left four children, two sons and two daughters. The elder daughter (afterwards Mrs. Masham) was a grown woman. I took her to St. Albans, where she lived with me and my children, and I treated her with as great kindness as if she had been my sister."

me," in the Coxe MSS. the Duchess calls Mr. Hill "a merchant, or projector," who was in some way related to Mr. Harley, and by profession an Anabaptist.—Coxe MSS. vol. xlv. p. 11.

It appears from this statement, that Mrs. Hill must have enjoyed considerable opportunities of studying the character of her patroness; nor were her means of learning Anne's peculiarities and defects less frequent and advantageous.

"After some time," adds the Duchess, "a bedchamber woman of the Princess of Denmark's died; and as in that reign (after the Princesses were grown up) rockers, though not gentlewomen, had been advanced to be bedchamber women, I thought I might ask the Princess to give the vacant place to Mrs. Hill. At first, indeed, I had some scruple about it; but this being removed by persons I thought wiser, with whom I consulted, I made the request to the Princess, and it was granted.

"As for the younger daughter, (who is still living,) I engaged my Lord Marlborough, when the Duke of Gloucester's family was settled, to make her laundress to him, which was a good provision for her; and when the Duke of Gloucester died, I obtained for her a pension of 200*l.* a year, which I paid her out of the privy purse. And some time after I asked the Queen's leave to buy her an annuity out of some of the funds; representing to her Majesty, that as the privy purse money produced no interest, it would be the same thing to her if, instead of the pension to Mrs. Hill, she gave her at once a sum sufficient to produce an annuity, and that by this

means, her Majesty would make a certain provision for one who had served the Duke of Gloucester. The Queen was pleased to allow the money for that purchase, and it is very probable that Mrs. Hill has the annuity to this day, and perhaps nothing else, unless she saved money after her sister had made her deputy to the privy purse, which she did, as soon as she had supplanted me."

Not contented with conferring these important benefits, the Duchess, it appears, resolved to provide for the whole family.

"The elder son was," she says, "at my request, put by my Lord Godolphin into a place in the Custom-house; and when, in order to his advancement to a better, it was necessary to give security for his good behaviour, I got a relation of the Duke of Marlborough's to be bound for him in two thousand pounds. His brother (whom the bottle-men afterwards called *honest* Jack Hill) was a tall boy, whom I clothed (for he was all in rags) and put to school at St. Albans to one Mr. James, who had been an usher under Dr. Busby of Westminster; and whenever I went to St. Alban's I sent for him, and was as kind to him as if he had been my own child. After he had learned what he could there, a vacancy happening of page of honour to the Prince of Denmark, his highness was pleased, at my request, to

take him. I afterwards got my Lord Marlborough to make him groom of the bedchamber to the Duke of Gloucester. And though my lord always said that Jack Hill *was good for nothing*, yet, to oblige me, he made him his aide-de-camp, and afterwards gave him a regiment. But it was his sister's interest that raised him to be a *general*, and to command in that ever-memorable expedition to Quebec; I had no share in doing him the honours. To finish what I have to say on this subject; when Mr. Harley thought it useful to attack the Duke of Marlborough in parliament, this Quebec *general*, this *honest* Jack Hill, this *once ragged boy*, *whom I clothed*, happening to be sick in bed, was nevertheless persuaded by his *sister* to get up, wrap himself in warmer clothes than those I had given him, and go to the House to vote against the Duke. I may here add, that even the *husband* of Mrs. Masham had several obligations to me: it was at my instance that he was first made a page, then an equerry, and afterwards groom of the bedchamber to the Prince; for all which he himself thanked me, as for favours procured by my means. As for Mrs. Masham herself, I had so much kindness for her, and had done so much to oblige her, without having ever done anything to offend her, that it was too long before I could bring myself to think her other than a true friend, or forbear

rejoicing at any instance of favour shown her by the Queen. I observed, indeed, at length, that she was grown more shy of coming to me, and more reserved than usual when she was with me; but I imputed this to her peculiar moroseness of temper, and for some time made no other reflection upon it." *

The moroseness of temper, which might be a constitutional infirmity incident to the family stock, was accompanied, however, with a suppleness of deportment, a servility, and a talent for artifice, which are not incompatible with a deep-seated pride, and with a contumacious turn of mind, subdued to superiors, but venting itself with redoubled virulence on those on whom it can with impunity be spent. Towards the Queen, Mrs. Hill displayed, as might be expected, a humility and sweetness of manner which proved, doubtless, highly acceptable to one accustomed to receive only a lofty condescension, not to speak of frequent exhibitions of passion, in her earlier and haughtier friend. Mrs. Hill's real sentiments on religion and politics happened to be, fortunately for herself, in accordance with those of the Queen. Anne, accustomed to opposition and remonstrance, nay, sometimes, rebukes, upon certain points which she had at heart, delighted in the enthusiasm of her lowly attendant concerning matters hitherto forbidden

* Conduct.

ner to dwell upon. Mrs. Hill was an enemy to the Hanoverian succession, if not a partisan of the exiled Stuarts,—subjects on which the Queen and the Duchess were known to have frequent controversies, which sometimes degenerated into angry disputes.

These bickerings had, in the sedate and guarded Abigail, a watchful and subtle observer. It may easily be credited that she turned them skilfully to account. Not that she was so imprudent as to hoist a banner on the side of Anne whilst the redoubtable Sarah was present; but her sympathy, her acquiescence, her responsive condolences, when, after the storm subsided, the Queen poured forth into her friendly ear confidential complaints of the absent Duchess, were ever ready, and effected their purpose. The flattering gratitude and humility with which she listened and soothed the Queen; their cordial concurrence on topics which then divided the female world, whilst they employed masculine minds; gradually worked a way for the lady-dresser into the affections of the Queen, and gradually, also, ejected, by a subterranean process, the only obstacle to her undivided ascendency which Mrs. Hill, in her powerful kinswoman, might have to encounter.

The Duchess was the last of all the court to perceive the dangerous influence of Abigail, and to acknowledge the extent of the new favourite's

power. She depended on Mrs. Hill's fidelity to her; she depended on that weakest of all bonds, a sense of obligation; she considered her cousin as, for her sake, a vigilant observer of the Queen's actions, and as a lowly partisan, an attached and useful friend.

From the time that she had known of the distress of her humble relatives, she had, as she alleges in her letter to Bishop Burnet, "helped them in every way, without any motive but charity and relation, having never known their father:"* nor did the peculiar manner of the humble bedchamber woman rouse the pride or the suspicions of the mistress of the robes. "She had," writes the Duchess, recalling circumstances, possibly, at the moment unobserved, "a shy, reserved behaviour towards me, always avoided entering into free conversation with me, and made excuses when I wanted her to go abroad with me. And what I thought ill breeding, or surly honesty, has since proved to be a design deeply laid, as she had always the artifice to hide very carefully the power which she had over the Queen."†

Affairs were in this state when a rumour reached the Duchess, of her cousin's marriage with a gentleman named Masham, whom the Duchess had likewise promoted to a place in the

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlv. p. 11. † Ibid.

Queen's household. This took place in the summer of 1707, when the battle of Ramillies had propped up the declining favour of Marlborough, and consequently repaired, in some degree, the breaches of confidence between the Queen and the Duchess. The Duchess, although naturally startled at the intelligence, acted in the direct and candid manner which strong minds can alone adopt on such occasions. She went to her cousin, and asked if the report were true. Mrs. Masham acknowledged the fact, and begged to be forgiven for having concealed it.*

It was not in the power of her artful relative, nor of her tool, the Queen, much longer to blind the woman whom they had, with true vulgarity of mind, gloried in deceiving.† The Duchess, in an unpublished manuscript explanation of her conduct, addressed to Mr. Hutchinson, describes her incredulity upon the subject of the baseness of one, to whom she had acted in "the capacity of a mother;" whom she had preserved from starving; and who repaid her bounty by seizing every opportunity of undermining her benefactress.‡

* Political pamphlet, entitled a "Continuation of the Review of a late Treatise," &c. London, 1741, p. 31.

† MSS. B. M. Coxe Papers, vol. xliv.

‡ Conduct, p. 183.

Mrs. Masham could not assign any adequate reason for the concealment of the marriage, for it was at once suitable in point of rank, and prudent in respect to circumstances. Mr. Samuel Masham was the eighth son of Sir Francis Masham, a Baronet, and was reputed to be a gentleman of honour, and of worth. Already had he risen from the post of page to that of equerry in Prince George's household, and from the office of equerry had been promoted to that of groom of the bedchamber. The Duchess had herself, as it has been stated, assisted in his elevation; for it was at that time understood that no person who was not agreeable to the Marlborough family, or supposed to be, in particular, acceptable to the Duchess, could be raised to any office of importance.* Hence Mr. Masham could not be objectionable to the Duchess as a

* Mr. Masham was first page of honour to Queen Anne and to Prince George, and also equerry to the latter. In 1710 he was preferred to the command of a regiment of horse, and advanced to the rank of brigadier-general. At the famous creation in 1711, he was made a peer, by the title of Lord Masham of Oates, in the county of Essex. By his lady, who died in 1734, he had three sons and two daughters. Anne, his lordship's eldest daughter, married, in 1726, Henry Hoare, grandson of Sir Richard Hoare, formerly Lord Mayor of London.—*London Chronicle.*

match for her cousin, except on one ground—he was a relation of Mr. Harley.

The Duchess, notwithstanding that she felt she had reason to be offended with Mrs. Masham's conduct, was willing to impute it to "want of breeding and bashfulness," rather than to that deceptive and petty spirit which rejoices in mystery. She forgave and embraced her cousin, and wished her joy; and then, entering into conversation with her on other subjects, began in the most friendly manner to contrive how the bride might be accommodated with lodgings, by removing her sister into some apartments occupied by the Duchess. After this point was arranged, the Duchess, still deceived, inquired whether the Queen were informed of the marriage, and "very innocently" offered her services to acquaint her Majesty with the affair. Mrs. Masham, who had, says the Duchess, by this time learned the art of dissimulation pretty well, answered, with an untroubled mien, that the bedchamber women had already apprised the Queen of it,—hoping by that reply to prevent any further examination of the matter. The Duchess, all astonishment, and probably, though she does not acknowledge it, all fury, went directly to the Queen, and inquired why her Majesty had not been so kind as to tell her of her cousin's marriage; putting her in

mind of a favourite quotation from Montaigne, adopted by Anne, namely, that it was no breach of secrecy "to tell an intimate friend anything, because it was only like telling it to oneself."*

"This," to speak in the Duchess's own words, "I said, I thought she herself ought to have told me of; but the only thing I was concerned at was, that this plainly showed a change in her Majesty towards me, as I had once before observed to her; when she was pleased to say, that it was not she that was changed, but me; and that if I was the same to her, she was sure she was so to me." Upon this the Queen answered, with a great deal of earnestness, and without thinking to be upon her guard, "I believe I have spoken to her a hundred times to tell you of it, and she would not."

This answer startled the Duchess very much; and she began to reflect on the incongruity of her Majesty's two answers; the first asserting that she believed the bedchamber women had told her of Mrs. Masham's marriage; the second, implying that Mrs. Masham and her Majesty had repeatedly held consultations upon the subject.

This reserve, and the evident collusion between the parties, roused the suspicions of the Duchess,

* Conduct, p. 181.

and she instantly resolved to commence a strict examination into the relative position, and the ultimate end and object of the parties thus implicated in what she deemed a conspiracy against her power and peace. Fortunately for her biographers, she has left ample explanations, carefully preserved, of all those passages of her life which relate to her ultimate dismissal from the Queen's service. In a letter which many years afterwards she is said to have addressed to Bishop Burnet, she gives a clear statement, which she corroborates by copies of all the correspondence which passed between herself and the Queen relative to the great affair of her life.

It was not long before the Duchess, on instituting an inquiry among her friends, discovered that the Queen had even gone herself secretly to her new favourite's marriage in the "Scotch doctor's chamber," a circumstance which was discovered by a boy, who belonged to one of the under servants, and who saw her Majesty go thither alone.* The marriage had also been confided to several persons of distinction.

It was easy to be informed of that which every body but herself knew; and, in less than a week, the indignant Duchess discovered that her cousin was an "absolute favourite," and

* MS. Letter to Mr. Hutchinson, B. M.

that when the marriage was solemnised at Dr. Arbuthnott's lodging, her Majesty had called for a round sum out of the privy purse. To this intelligence was added the still more startling information, that hours of confidential communication were daily passed by Mrs. Masham in the Queen's apartments, whilst Prince George, who was now a confirmed invalid, was asleep; but who, in spite of the advantage taken of his slumbers, had been one of the illustrious confidants on this occasion.

The Duchess could now trace the whole system of deception which had been carried on to her injury for a considerable time; her relative and former dependent being the chief agent—her sovereign the accomplice. She could account for the interest which Harley had now acquired at court by means of this new instrument. She could explain to her astonished and irritated mind certain incidents, which had seemed of little moment when they occurred, but which afforded a mortifying confirmation of all that she had learned. "My reflection," she says, "brought to my mind many passages, which had seemed odd and unaccountable, but had left no impression of suspicion or jealousy.* Particularly I remembered that a long while before this, being with the

* Conduct, p. 185.

Queen, (to whom I had gone very privately from my lodgings to the bedchamber,) on a sudden this woman, not knowing I was there, came in with the boldest and gayest air possible; but upon sight of me stopped, and immediately changing her manner, and making a most solemn courtesy, '*Did* your Majesty ring?' and then went out again."

This behaviour needed now no further explanation. The Duchess perceived too late that she was supplanted; and she was resolved that Mrs. Masham should quickly know that her injured benefactress was undeceived. She wrote, therefore, with her usual promptitude and sincerity, the following candid, but at the same time moderate letter to her rival. Godolphin, whom she consulted upon all occasions, probably pruned it into the following careful form.

"Since the conversation I had with you at your lodgings, several things have happened to confirm me in what I was hard to believe—that you have made me returns very unsuitable to what I might have expected. I always speak my mind so plainly, that I should have told you so myself, if I had had the opportunity which I wished for; but being now so near parting,

think this way of letting you know it, is like to be the least uneasy to you, as well as to

"Your humble servant,

"S. MARLBOROUGH."

To this letter no immediate reply was returned; for, doubtless, Mrs. Masham had, on the other hand, her advisers. The Duchess in vain waited all the day at Windsor, after sending her letter, in expectation of a reply. Mrs. Masham was, however, obliged to consult with her great director, before she could frame an answer on so "nice a matter." It was, indeed, no easy point to explain, that a poor relation, only a dresser, as the Duchess remarked, and she a groom of the stole, should conceal from a relation to whom she owed everything, that affair which most concerned her; whilst the Queen, who, for thirty years had never disguised one circumstance from her faithful Freeman, should be led into the plot.

The primary origin of her disgrace she imputed, when time had cooled her resentments, to her efforts to establish the Whigs in the Queen's favour. The immediate source of the quarrel was the successful endeavour of Mrs. Hill to supplant the cousin, to whom she professed to owe great obligations. For, as the Duchess affirms, even when every word she spoke had become dis-

tasteful to Anne, and when every step she took was canvassed in the Queen's closet, still the Queen declared she was not in the least altered, whilst Mrs. Masham professed the deepest gratitude.*

At length an answer was sent, the whole construction and style of which proved it, in the opinion of the Duchess, to be the production of an artful man, who knew perfectly well how to manage the affair. To Harley she imputed a deceptive and plotting character of mind, which by others was termed prudence. "His practices," as the Duchess called them, "which were deemed fair in a politician, were now fully understood by the two great men, Marlborough and Godolphin, who were their object. To him, therefore, the Duchess attributed the cautious, polite, and submissive letter, in which, expressing her grief at her Grace's displeasure, and her unconsciousness of its precise cause, the careful Abigail sought to draw forth an explicit declaration of the cause of the Duchess's chagrin, by inquiring who had been her enemy upon this occasion. But she addressed one whose prudence was, in this instance, stronger than her passions. The Duchess assured her cousin that her resentment did not proceed from any representations of others, but

* Coxe, Papers vol. xlv. p. 13.

from her own observation, which made the impression the stronger; and she declined entering further into the subject by letter.*

The Duchess of Marlborough was now, therefore, at open variance with her cousin. Towards her Majesty she stood in a predicament the most curious and unprecedented that perhaps ever existed between sovereign and subject. The amused and astonished court beheld Anne cautiously creeping out of that subjection in which the Duchess had, according to her enemies, long held the timid sovereign.

"The grand inference," says the authoress of the 'Other Side of the Question,' addressing the Duchess in her days of almost bed-ridden sickness, after the publication of the 'Conduct,' "that your grace draws from all this is, that you are betrayed. But those of the world are rather such as these,—that the Queen was captive, and you her gaoler; that she was neither mistress of her power, nor free to express her own inclinations; that she was so far overawed by a length of oppression, as to dread the very approach of her tormentress; that she was forced to unbosom herself by stealth; and that she durst not venture upon a contest with your grace, even to set herself free from your insupportable tyranny."†

* Conduct, p. 190.

† Other Side of the Question, p. 311.

There was, doubtless, considerable justice in these bitter and insulting reproaches, heaped upon the Duchess when, by a late vindication of her life, she had drawn her enemies from their long repose. That all the real affection which the friendship of Morley and Freeman could boast, existed on the side of the Queen, is probable. Such was the opinion of their contemporaries. It was in the decline of her influence that the Duchess began to be querulous upon the subject of those little omissions of attention which pride and habit, not real, hearty attachment, rendered necessary to her happiness. It sounds strange to find a monarch excusing herself to a subject for not inquiring after her health directly upon the arrival of that lady from a sea-bathing place; yet such apologies as it neither became Anne to make, nor the Duchess to exact, are to be found in their published correspondence.*

The Duchess, according to the opinion of one of her confidential friends, Mr. Mainwaring, was totally deficient in that "part of craft which Mr. Hobbes very prettily calls crooked wisdom."† "Apt," as she herself expresses it, "to tumble out her mind," ‡ her openness and honesty were appreciated, when at an advanced age, and after she

* Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 63.

† Ibid. p. 105. ‡ MS. Letter, British Museum.

had run the career of five courts,—by that experienced judge, the Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who often presumed upon the venerable Duchess's candour in telling her unpalatable truths, which none but the honest could have borne to hear.* It was this uprightness and singleness of mind which rendered the Duchess unwilling to believe in the duplicity and the influence of her cousin. Warned of it by Mr. Mainwaring, it was not until she found in the Queen a defender of Mrs. Masham's secret marriage, that the Duchess was roused into suspicion. It was then that she communicated her conviction to Lord Godolphin and to Marlborough, and besought their assistance and advice.

Marlborough, acquainted as he had for years been with every cabal in every court in Europe, was singularly ignorant, in this instance, of that which was passing at home. Godolphin, better informed, had bestowed but little attention to it, and had placed but little importance on its consequences. Towards the middle of this year he received, whilst at Meldert, complaints from the Duchess, which drew from him this laconic and stern reply:—

"The wisest thing is to have to do with as few

* Preface to Lord Wharncliffe's Ed. of Lady M. W.'s Letters, p. 74.

people as possible. If you are sure that Mrs. Masham speaks of business to the Queen, I should think you might, with some caution, tell her of it, which would do good; for she certainly must be grateful, and mind what you say." *

To soothe irritations was, on other occasions besides this, the arduous office of the Duke; and he was induced, from prior impressions, to write in a conciliatory strain to his often offended Duchess. When, in March, he had prepared measures for carrying on the war, and had completed every arrangement for his voyage into Holland, the only thing which detained him in England was, says Cunningham, "the quarrel among the women about the court." He desired his Duchess "to put an end to those controversies, and to avoid all occasions of suspicion and disgust; and not to suffer herself to grow insolent upon the favour of fortune; otherwise," said he, "I shall hardly be able hereafter to excuse your fault, or to justify my own actions, however meritorious." To which the Duchess replied, "I will take care of those things, so that you need not be in any fear about me; but whoever shall think to remove me out of the Queen's favour, let them take care lest they remove themselves."

* Conduct, p. 197.

"Such things as these," remarks Cunningham, "must be borne with among women; for few persons have drawn such rash conclusions concerning uncertain events but fortune has deceived them."* It was not long, however, before Marlborough perceived that the Duchess was not mistaken in her apprehensions; nor before he became painfully aware of the fact, that services of the greatest magnitude are often not to be weighed against slights, and petty provocations.

* Cunningham, b. ix. p. 82.

CHAPTER V.

State of parties—Friendship of Marlborough and Godolphin —Discovery of Mr. Harley's practices—Intrigues of the Court.

The Duke of Marlborough possessed at this time the confidence and amity of the most eminent of the Whig leaders. Notwithstanding the efforts which, in conjunction with Godolphin, he made to preserve a dignified, and, as he deemed it, a salutary neutrality between the two great parties, the Whigs had, during many sessions, regarded him as their own; and the jealousy which they are said to have entertained of his proceedings, guided by a more moderate spirit than their own, was not manifested when their appreciation of his public character came to be put to the proof.

In Godolphin, his dearest friend, his whole confidence was reposed. These two great men

had but one heart, one mind. On all important subjects they saw, they felt, in the same manner and degree. Their correspondence breathes the sentiments of a perfect union, and of the most unreserved communication. Their friendship was the handmaid to Marlborough's glory; it was his rock of defence, when from the camp he turned his longing gaze to England; it was his sure resource, when buffeted by cabals abroad. To Godolphin, Marlborough owed much; and it may be said that his glory was reflected upon the honest and experienced Lord Treasurer. But Godolphin was indebted to his union with the Marlborough family for some obloquy, and for much jealousy, both at court and among the people. His close alliance with them was looked upon ungraciously; and, by some, even the constitution was thought to be endangered by the overweening influence of Marlborough, and by the fact that the army, the treasury, and the ascendency at foreign courts, were all centered in one family.*

Godolphin, however, seems to have been content to share the downfal of his friends the Duke and Duchess. Hitherto he had supported the continuance of the war, by every argument which he could suggest to the Queen, and had thus

* Lediard, vol. ii. p. 5.

incurred her displeasure.* He had listened to the faction, whilst consolidating the Union with Scotland, in opposition to the counsels of Somers, and of Chancellor Cowper, and had thus forfeited their esteem. To this measure his ruin has been imputed. "Though that man," says Cunningham, "had nothing in him that was abject, nothing mean, nothing low, except the lowliness of his mind, which was naturally disposed to be humble, yet he had not spirit and magnanimity equal to the settlement of the kingdoms; and, with regard to posthumous fame, he was indifferent to all posterity but his own."†

Yet, perhaps, the instrument which most effectually lowered the influence of Godolphin was the hatred and consequent ill offices of Harley. Between these two ministers disunion had long since widened into entire aversion; and it was the aim of each to disparage and almost to ruin the other.‡ This disgust added a fresh incentive to the thirst for power to which Harley's ambitious nature made him prone; whilst it was confirmed by his dislike and dread of that Duchess who had ever recourse to Godolphin's counsels in times of difficulty.

The party which supported Marlborough was

* Other Side, p. 316. † B. ix. p. 80.

‡ Conduct, p. 70.

still, however, unbroken, and still pre-eminent. Lord Cowper, the distinguished chancellor, who was the greatest orator of his time, owed his elevation to the great men with whom Marlborough was allied. Lord Somers, infirm in health, and almost incapacitated from taking any part in public affairs, still gave the Whigs the benefits of his wisdom and experience.

Lord Halifax was in the vigour of his physical strength, and of his judgment; whilst Wharton, by his activity and industry, was ready to probe the strength and weakness of those who opposed his party, and generally succeeded in obtaining a knowledge of their intrigues. These powerful-minded men were aided by Lord Sunderland and Mr. Boyle, the two Secretaries of State—men in the prime of life, who with ease fulfilled the laborious duties imposed on them by their offices.*

These distinguished politicians were now, according to the Duchess of Marlborough, the objects of Harley's intrigues. About the same time that Mrs. Masham's secret influence over the Queen was discovered, Lord Godolphin obtained information of Mr. Harley's practices, both within and without. His design, accroding to this partial authority, was " to ruin the Whigs

* Lediard.

by disuniting them from the ministry, and so to pave the way for the Tories to rise again; whom he thought to unite in himself, as their head, after he had made it impossible for them to think of a reconciliation with the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Godolphin." *

The Duchess lost no time in acquainting the Duke, who was still on the continent, with this discovery. His answer to her communication bespeaks a mind weary with the contentions of the court, and indifferent, so far as his personal dealings were concerned, to the ascendency of his own, or the opposing party.

"If you have good reason," he replies, "for what you write of the kindness and esteem the Queen has for Mrs. Masham and Mr. Harley, my opinion should be, that my Lord Treasurer and I should tell her Majesty what is good for herself; and if that will not prevail, to be quiet, and to let Mr. Harley and Mrs. Masham do what they please; for I own I am quite tired, and if the Queen can be safe, I shall be glad. I hope the Lord Treasurer will be of my mind; and then we shall be much happier than by being in a perpetual struggle."

At a later time he remarks—

"What you write concerning the Queen, Mr.

* Conduct, p. 191.

Harley, and Mrs. Masham, is of that consequence, that I think no time is to be lost in putting a stop to that management, or else let them have it entirely in their own hands."

This, however, was an easier task for the Duke to advise, than for the Duchess to adopt. The Queen had still so great a portion of regard left for her early playmate and friend, that she might yet have relented, if the Duchess would at least have remained passively in the shade, or sustained her reverse of favour with dignified equanimity. Such a part would have been politic, and it might have been successful; for in most quarrels it is the petty provocations which embitter enmities, whilst the first grave cause is comparatively but little felt.

It is evident that Queen Anne had neither the inclination nor the courage to undertake an open quarrel with her ministry, nor with her early, and still dreaded, perhaps still beloved, friend. Upon hearing from Lord Godolphin his suspicions of the mischief that Harley intended to the party to which he and Marlborough were attached, her Majesty was at first incredulous; but when assured by the Lord Treasurer that if Harley remained in the royal favour, he and Lord Marlborough must quit her Majesty's service, she became alarmed, and immediately wrote a letter

full of affection, and indeed of submission, to her "dear Mrs. Freeman." These extraordinary productions, such as were never perhaps addressed before, nor since, by a sovereign to a subject, were either the effect of artful advice, or of pusillanimous caution; since they were followed by no amendment in respect to certain matters complained of, nor by any returning kindness for the discarded friend whom she addressed.*

Lord Godolphin also touched upon private matters, and endeavoured to enlighten the mind of her Majesty upon the ever-recurring feuds of Mrs. Masham and the Duchess. "I remember," relates the latter in her manuscript Vindication, "he told me he had convinced the Queen indeed that Mrs. Masham was in the wrong, but that she showed she was very desirous to think her in the right." †

This disposition in her Majesty rendered any hopes of a final reconciliation visionary. But the explanation brought some symptoms of relenting, from the haughty and elated Abigail.

The Duchess remained some time at St. James's, in anxious expectation of hearing from Mrs. Masham, who, she now supposed, would

* Conduct, p. 202.

† Coxe Papers, vol. xliv.

endeavour to clear up all uneasiness that had arisen between her and her noble relative. But, to her surprise, day after day passed, and not even a message arrived, although the wrathful Sarah and her rival slept twelve days under the same roof. "At length," relates the Duchess, "she having passed by her window one night on my return home, sent one of her maids to my woman, to ask *her* how I did, and to let me know she was gone to Kensington."

This behaviour appeared so ridiculous, and probably so absurdly condescending to the Duchess, that she could not forbear speaking of it to the Queen, the next time she saw her Majesty. To her surprise and consternation, the Queen defended Mrs. Masham; she looked grave, and answered that Mrs. Masham was "mightily in the right not to go near her grace." Upon this reply, a sharp altercation ensued. The Duchess returned with spirit, "that she did not understand *that*, since a clearing up of a mutual misunderstanding had been left until a meeting took place between her and her cousin." To this Anne, who had gained an unwonted supply of resolution, returned, that "it was very natural that Mrs. Masham should be afraid of going near the Duchess, when she saw that she was angry with her." The Duchess

retaliated by saying, "that her cousin could have no reason to be afraid, unless she knew herself guilty of some crime." But she could elicit no further explanation from the Queen; for Anne was not fertile in argument, and had besides a practice, when she was obstinately bent upon any point, of repeating over and over again the same words. This provoking custom of substituting repetition instead of argument, which, according to the Duke of Marlborough, the Queen inherited from King James, she now called into requisition, to repel the fierce interrogatories of her exasperated and awful friend. "So she continued," relates the Duchess, "to say it was very natural, and she was very much in the right." And all that her mortified but unsubdued listener could glean from this conversation was, that the new favourite was deeply rooted in her Majesty's heart, and that it would be more advisable to come to open hostilities with her ungrateful cousin, than to take any measures to mend the breach between them. It was on one of these occasions that the Duchess closed the door of the closet in which she and the Queen sat, with such violence, that the noise echoed through the whole apartment.*

Incensed as she was, a visit from Mrs. Masham,

* London Chronicle, 1763.

two days afterwards, failed to soothe the offended Duchess. She was abroad when the lowly Abigail called; but she took care, on her return, to give a general order to her servants, to say, whenever Mrs. Masham came, that she "was not at home." But, after some time, an interview took place by mutual appointment. The scene was such as might have been expected. The conversation began by the Duchess reproaching Mrs. Masham with the change in the Queen's sentiments towards her, which she could not fail to attribute entirely to Mrs. Masham's secret influence over her Majesty. She upbraided her cousin for her concealment of that intimacy and confidence with which the Queen honoured her; and told her that she considered such artifice as a very bad sign of the motives which dictated such conduct. "It was certain," the Duchess added, "that no good intentions towards herself could influence her actions."

Mrs. Masham was, as it seems, prepared with a reply full of condescension and insult. "To this," says the Duchess, "she very gravely answered, that she was sure the Queen, who had always loved me extremely, would always be very kind to me. It was some minutes before I could recover from the surprise with which so extraordinary an answer struck me.

To see a woman whom I have raised out of the dust, put on such a superior air, and to hear her assure me, by way of consolation, that the Queen would always be very kind to me!" Yet restraining the impetuous burst of passion which might have been expected, she remained silent; "for I was stunned," she observes, "to hear her say so strange a thing."*

The Duchess then taunted Mrs. Masham with carrying to the Queen tales against some, and petitions in favour of other members of her Majesty's household. Mrs. Masham, on the other hand, defended herself by saying that she only took to her royal mistress certain petitions which came to the back-stairs, and with which she knew that the Duchess did not care to be troubled. This perversion of facts did not blind the Duchess to the actual state of affairs, and the conversation ended in a long and ominous silence, broken by Mrs. Masham's rising, and saying she hoped that the Duchess would sometimes give her leave to inquire after her health. Notwithstanding this condescending speech, the lady in power never once deigned, nor dared, to visit the dejected and deserted favourite.

Partly from policy, and, probably, partly from curiosity to see how matters stood, the Duchess thought

* MS.

proper, when her cousin's marriage was publicly announced, to visit her with Lady Sunderland, purely, however, as she alleged, out of respect to the Queen, and to avoid any noise or disagreeable discourse which her refusing that ordinary act of civility might occasion. Fortunately, however, for the peace of St. James's, the ungrateful bride was not at home when this undeserved honour was paid to her, by one from whom she had merited nothing but neglect.

The breach, however certain, and however sure the process by which it was widened, was not, as yet, perceptible to the court. Possibly all were reluctant to open a battery of anecdote and scandal against the redoubtable Sarah, who might be restored to her long-asserted ascendency. The Duchess was not without hopes of resuming her influence. During the Christmas holidays, she went to pay her respects to the Queen; but had the misery of learning from the page, before she went in, that Mrs. Masham had just been sent for. The last interview in which the least traces of friendly regard might be observed, must be told in the Duchess's own words. It is evident that she had some lingering expectations that all differences might yet be healed, and that the Queen's regard could be revived.

"The moment I saw her Majesty, I plainly

perceived she was uneasy. She stood all the while I was with her, and looked as coldly on me as if her intention was that I should no longer doubt of my loss of her affections. Upon observing what reception I had, I said 'I was sorry I had happened to come so unseasonably.' I was making my courtesy to go away, when the Queen, with a great deal of disorder in her face, and without speaking one word, took me by the hand. And when, thereupon, I stooped to kiss hers, she took me up with a very cold embrace, and then, without one kind word, let me go. So strange a treatment of me, after my long and faithful services, and after such repeated assurances from her Majesty of an unalterable affection, made me think that I ought, in justice to myself, as well as in regard to my mistress's interest, to write to her in the plainest and sincerest manner possible, and expostulate with her upon her change to me, and upon the new counsels by which she seemed to be wholly governed."

The letter addressed on this occasion by the Duchess to the Queen was truly characteristic of the honest mind by which it was framed. There is neither flattery nor violence, in the simple declaration of wounded feeling, expressed in the Duchess's forcible language; and Queen Anne appears to have been touched by the direct

appeal to her best dispositions, which it contains.* For some days, indeed, no notice was taken of this remarkable epistle; but after a short time had elapsed, an answer was presented to the Duchess, who found in it symptoms of a relenting spirit in her altered sovereign; and, anxious on account of others, as well as for her own comfort, to avoid an open rupture, "she endeavoured once more to put on as easy an appearance as she could."†

Upon a review of the circumstances which attended this notable quarrel, the character of the Duchess appears in a much more favourable light than, from the many defects of her ill-governed mind, could reasonably have been expected. In the first instance, she was generous to her kinswoman, confiding, and lenient. Slow in being aroused to suspicion, her conduct was straightforward and judicious when the truth was forced upon her unwilling conviction. She acted with sincerity, but not with address; and feelings too natural for a courtier to indulge were betrayed in the course of those altercations in which the character of Abigail is displayed in the worst colours. Artful and plausible, yet daring and insolent, according to circumstances—shameless in her ingratitude, the mean and despicable

* See Appendix. † Conduct.

tool of others, with few advantages of education,—that abject but able woman acquired an ascendency over the mind of Anne that was truly astonishing.

The poor Queen is to be pitied—we dare not say despised—for her subserviency, her little artifices, her manœuvres in closets and the back stairs, her degrading connivance at duplicity, her thirst for flattery, or for what she termed friendship. Her confidence and affection, thus extended towards an unworthy object, henceforth weakened rather than adorned her character.

It is remarkable, that when she learned to dispense with the friendship of the Marlborough family, the Queen ceased to be great abroad and respected at home.

CHAPTER VI.

Vexations and disappointments which harassed the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough —Vacillations of Anne— Her appointment of Tory bishops.

THE ensuing five or six years of the life of the Duchess of Marlborough present little else than annals of party rivalries and of court dissensions. Those who once envied her had now their revenge. To thirst still for power, and to be bowed down ever and anon by a secret but all-pervading influence; to witness one day the altered countenance of her royal mistress, and to experience, the next, relentings of her sovereign's weak mind; to suffer the sneers of her adversaries, and to encounter the still more grating pity of her friends; to be blamed by all parties, and even reviled by almost all the Whig leaders, save the devoted and moderate Marlborough, or the

faithful Godolphin,—these were the trials of the Duchess's middle age.

That her temper was soured by these vicissitudes of hope and fear, and by the excitement of all those angry passions which disappointment kindles, cannot be doubted. From the great age which she attained, and from the clearness of her intellect until the close of her existence, there is no reason to suppose that her health, or even her spirits, were eventually impaired by the everlasting contentions of which she was the centre.

For a while, after her explanatory letter to the Queen, and her Majesty's reply, "the great breach," as the Duchess calls it, was not made public.* It was some time before Marlborough and Godolphin could be convinced of the secret influence which Harley exercised, or that the former, especially, could be induced to take the matter seriously to heart. The Duchess in vain importuned him to revenge her wrongs, and harassed him until he was heart-sick with the details of all that her enemies performed and projected. "You may be sure," writes the Duke to her from Helchin, on Sept. 19, 1707, "I shall never mention Mrs. Masham, either in letter or discourse. I am so weary of all this sort of management, that I think it is the greatest folly in the

* Conduct.

world to think any struggling can do good when both sides have a mind to be angry."*

Yet, in spite of this simple philosophy, the poor Duke was constrained to acknowledge himself "not the same man," after vexatious and embarrassing letters had reached him from England. It was not, however, long before the Queen's dispositions were completely manifest. It was said that Prince George was brought into the scheme to co-operate with Harley against the Whigs, and that his mind was worked on by representations that he had not his due share in the government, and that he was excluded from it by the great power which the Duke of Marlborough and the Lord Treasurer exercised. The Queen, it was alleged by the new favourites, was a mere cipher in the Duchess's hands, whilst the Duke controlled her affairs; and it was moreover declared to her that there was not now a single Jacobite in the kingdom;† an assertion made to dissipate her fears of the high church ascendency—with what foundation, the succeeding years fully evinced.

There were now three bishopricks vacant; and the Queen quickly marked the course which she meant to pursue, by appointing Dr. Blackhall to the see of Exeter, and Dr. William James to

* Coxe, book i. p. 377. † Burnet, vol. v. p. 358.

that of Chester. These divines were, indeed, men of excellent character, and so far the Queen was able to justify herself to her ministry that she would have none but such men appointed to bishoprics. But they were likewise strong Tories, who had submitted to the Revolution, yet condemned it, and had objected to all the measures by which that great event had been followed. To qualify this proceeding, the Queen made other translations more acceptable to the Whigs; and before the meeting of parliament, in a conference of the leading members of that party, they were assured that her heart was wholly with them; yet Harley's industrious endeavours to convince the Tories that such was not the case, and that the Queen was weary of their adversaries, and knew her friends, were calculated to counteract that impression.

Marlborough lost no time, when news of these nominations reached him from England, of expostulating with the Queen upon her choice of the two bishops. A letter, addressed by him to Lord Godolphin, being shown to the Queen, drew from her Majesty a vehement defence of Harley, with an explicit denial, at the same time, of her having been influenced by him in her late conduct.* "Mr. Harley," she assured her great general, "knew nothing of her Tory appoint-

* Coxe, p. 370—372.

ments, until it was the talk of the town." She disclaimed my Lady Marlborough's imputation, as she deemed it, that she had an entire confidence in Harley; and wondered "how Lady Marlborough could say such a thing, when she had been so often assured from her that she relied on none but Mr. Freeman and Mr. Montgomery."

The Duke, after an earnest expostulation in reply to this letter, suspended his remonstrances, calmly awaiting the current of events by which we are carried along in life, often independent of our free wills. He remained abroad all the summer, endeavouring to draw his affairs in Holland to a close, and solacing his wearied and vexed spirit with the hopes of one day enjoying in tranquillity the shades of Woodstock. Much of his time and thoughts was devoted to the completion and decoration of that magnificent palace, destined for two as gifted beings and stately inhabitants as ever trod its banquet-hall. In the midst of war, and, what harassed him far more, of politics, he turned with almost youthful delight to the minutiæ of those preparations for his luxurious home, which had in his mind an association with a deep-felt sentiment.

"My glasses," he writes from Meldert, "are come, and I have bespoke the hangings; for one

of my greatest pleasures is in doing all that in me lies, that we may as soon as possible enjoy that happy time of being quietly together, which I think of with pleasure, as often as I have my thoughts free to myself."*

And when the Duchess, in her letters, responded to these sentiments, his pleasure was blended with affectionate gratitude.

"I am obliged to you for your kind expression concerning Woodstock; it is certainly a pleasure to me when I hear the work goes on, for it is there I must be happy with you. The greatest pleasure I have, when I am alone, is the thinking of this, and flattering myself that we may then live so as to anger neither God nor men, if the latter be reasonable; but if they are otherways, I shall not much care, if *you* are pleased, and that I do my duty to God; for ambition and business is what after this war shall be abandoned by me."†

The Duke wrote habitually in this strain; but of late, the hollowness of those whose personal advancement constitutes the sole business of their lives, had been painfully manifested to him. Since the knowledge of the Duchess's downfal had become general, her failings, and the defects of the whole "Marlburghian faction," as it has

* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 83. † Ibid. p. 84.

been called by a contemporary writer, constituted the subject of general conversation; "being," says the caustic, but not dispassionate Cunningham, "bandied about the town by gossiping women, and by them greedily sucked in; whilst the inexperienced multitude, who, for the most part, look with envy on the grandeur and good fortune of their superiors, rejoiced at the Duchess of Marlborough's disgrace, and began to carry themselves with great insolence, as if any one of themselves were to have succeeded her in the Queen's favour."*

The Duchess, meantime, retired to Windsor; and, according to the same authority, "lived in quiet, nor did she take any pains to appease the anger of the incensed Queen; although repeatedly advised by her friend Mr. Mainwaryng, not to absent herself wholly from the court,—a line of conduct which he urged, not solely on her own account, but for the good of her friends. But the Duchess disregarded his admonitions; and by this indifference the artful Mrs. Masham gained ground, skilfully availing herself of her rival's absence to ingratiate herself more and more in the Queen's favour. Prince George, it appears, was unfavourable to the Masham faction. As a spectator, comparatively

* Cunningham, b. ix. p. 141.

but little concerned in all that passed, he probably dreaded the intrigues, the petty commotions, among the female hierarchy, which disturbed his conjugal repose. The Queen, at this time, fell into the inconvenient habit of holding nocturnal conferences with the Harley and Masham confederacy, and her health suffered in consequence. A humour in her eyes was the subject of public concern; and Prince George remarked in public, that it was no wonder she should suffer, but rather that she should not be otherwise indisposed, from late hours. This remark is said not to have fallen from him unawares. It was evident, in the sequel, that the Prince deemed the removal of Harley from the confidence of her Majesty indispensable.

The Duchess now aroused herself from her apathy; but it was too late. She employed spies about the Queen, and gained intelligence of all that happened. She worked upon the minds of Marlborough and Godolphin, and besought, if she did not command, their interference in the matter.

Serious thoughts of quitting her employments, and of resigning her offices in favour of her daughters, having received from the Queen a sort

of vague promise that her employments should be made over to them, now occupied her mind. For some time, the advice of friends, and more especially of her confidential correspondent, Mr. Mainwaring, delayed the performance of her intention. Yet, before finally giving up the game, she was anxious to make one more effort against the adverse party.

Before affairs came to a crisis, the discovery of a treasonable correspondence between a man named Gregg, and the Queen's enemies abroad, arrested the downfal of the Marlborough family, and delayed the elevation of Harley. Gregg was a clerk in the office of the Secretary of State, and much in his confidence; and there were many who hesitated not to consider the secretary as implicated in the delinquencies of his clerk. Yet it was by Harley that the affair was first brought to light.* More especially, Lord Sunderland charged Harley with being privy to the crime of Gregg; nor could the asseverations of the culprit, who was drawn in a sledge to the place of execution, and hanged, wholly silence the bitter accusations and unworthy suspicions of Sunderland.

The Queen, when urged to investigate the conduct of Harley, showed considerable reluctance

* Cunningham, vol. x. p. 132.

to act in the matter. She was "moved," to use an old-fashioned expression, when Marlborough and Godolphin spoke to her on the subject.* When, irritated by her determined though meek opposition, they told her plainly that it was impossible for them to do her Majesty any service whilst Mr. Harley remained in the council, she was still firm; and to the expressed resolution of Godolphin to leave her, she seemed insensible. But when Marlborough proffered his resignation, her royal heart was touched, and she studied by arguments and compliments to change his determination; but both her Treasurer and her General quitted her presence in disgust.

Anne repaired on the same day to the council, where Harley opened some matters relating to foreign affairs. The whole board seemed to be infected with sullenness; and, upon the Duke of Somerset remarking that it was impossible to transact any business whilst the General and the Treasurer were away, a deeper gloom overspread the faces of those who were present. The Queen then perceived that she must yield—a conviction which she received with feminine wrath and perverseness. She sent the next day for Marlborough, and told him that Mr. Harley should

* Burnet, p. 373.

in two days be dismissed; but she gave her concurrence to this desired measure with a deep resentment, which her tenacity of impressions rendered indelible.

It might now be expected that the Duchess's restoration to favour would ensue; but those who looked for such a termination of the political broil knew nothing of human nature. Anne never forgave being compelled to part with Harley. Her ministers perceived that they had lost her confidence; and Harley, through the favour of Mrs. Masham, still enjoyed opportunities of "practising upon the passions and credulity of the Queen," as Lady Marlborough expresses it.

Among those members of the ministry who went out of office in consequence of Harley's dismissal, was the celebrated Henry St. John, who immortalised the name of Bolingbroke.* He at that time held the office of Secretary at War; but his rise to political influence had begun in the earliest years of the Queen's reign.

Of a most powerful natural capacity, to which were added splendid attainments, the result of a careful education acting upon an ardent and grasping mind,—of great but misdirected ambi-

* Burnet.

tion,—Lord Bolingbroke was one of those men by whom Fate dealt unkindly, in subjecting them to the temptations of a political career. There is, indeed, no reason to conclude that Bolingbroke, untempted by that ambition to which he sacrificed so much, would have adorned private life by purity and temperance,—which were not the fashionable virtues of the day. When even the high-minded and reflecting Somers could tarnish his great qualities by licentious habits, there can be little cause to wonder that one who, like Bolingbroke, lived in a whirlwind, could be profane without a blush, and grossly immoral without contrition. Born not only with strong passions, but more especially with the most perilous of all, the passion for notoriety, Bolingbroke had not the protecting influence of a religious faith to temper his extravagances, nor to chasten his erring spirit when the dark hour had passed away, and had left his mind free to admire and worship the beauty of virtue; and to draw the comparison between his own conduct, and that rule which should have been his guide. The cable by which he was connected with that anchor which alone can keep the frail bark firm, was cut away. The infidelity of Bolingbroke, and his endeavours to impress his opinions upon others, are too well known to require further comment.

It may be well, from his intimate connexion with the political affairs of the day, as well as from the regard which the Duke of Marlborough once entertained for him, to trace the progress of that extraordinary mind, and of that inconsistent yet lofty character, of which Bolingbroke, both in his works and in the history of his life, has left us ample records.

It may seem unfair to say, that his early scepticism and his youthful thirst for distinction may be attributed, in some measure, to his education among individuals of the Presbyterian persuasion. Not that we mean, by such an assertion, to cast the slightest reflection upon the pious and generally conscientious body of non-conformists. But Bolingbroke, like many other young persons whose friends are opposed on matters of controversy, was the object of persuasion—the innocent cause of polemical discussion—the victim of well-meant efforts which drew in contrary ways.

This gifted descendant of a long line of eminent and ennobled warriors and statesmen was born at Battersea, in Surrey, in the year 1672, at the house of his paternal grandfather, Sir Walter St. John. The civil commotions, in which his grandfather had taken a prominent part, were then, in those later days of Charles the Second, hushed, not quelled; and the

effects of political and polemical differences not only still existed, but were cherished as sacred recollections by the elder branches of the St. John family, of whom Lady St. John, the grandmother of Bolingbroke, was an influential member. This excellent and zealous lady, although a charitable benefactress to the orthodox institutions of her village, was a steady adherent to the Puritans, and an earnest promoter of their principles in the mind of her youthful grandson. Unluckily she adopted that course of instruction which has been found to be peculiarly unsuccessful in training the minds of youth to certain religious impressions. It is universally remarked how little we respect what we have been forced to commit to memory,—however valuable may be the subject, however attractive the form of what we are thus compelled to receive into our rebellious imaginations. The spiritual adviser of Lady St. John, and the instructor of Bolingbroke, was Daniel Burgess, one of those singular compounds of fanaticism, shrewdness, humour, and obstinacy, who often obtain so remarkable an influence over the strongest intellects, as well as the most devout hearts. This zealous man acted with the usual blindness to the inclinations of youth, and with the ignorance of human nature which such persons display. "I was obliged," says

Lord Bolingbroke, writing almost with loathing of his earlier days, "while yet a boy, to read over the Commentaries of Dr. Manton, whose pride it was to have made an hundred and nineteen sermons on the hundred and nineteenth Psalm."

These spiritual exercises were, it is more than probable, counteracted, or at least discouraged, by his grandfather, who, after the Restoration, conformed to the national church, and received into his family, as chaplain, the learned Dr. Patrick, afterwards Bishop of Chichester and Ely, who remained many years in his family.

Henry, the object of these well-intended cares, claimed, on his mother's side, an alliance with the ancient and noble family of Rich, Earl of Warwick; from which loyal house he probably received those predilections for the Tory party which a mother could so easily implant; an influence which no non-conformist divine could readily counteract. But whilst thus he grew up, culling from different sources contrary opinions, it is probable that from his Presbyterian tutor he acquired that ardour for singular distinction, which is the characteristic mark of sectarianism of every description, and by which, indeed, in conjunction often with higher motives, its ramifications are extended and maintained.

It was not until after Bolingbroke had passed the period of early youth, that this love of display, not to dignify it with the name of ambition, took a higher aim than the desire of being the most lavish, the most fearless, the most eccentric, and the most profane profligate of his age. At Oxford, his powerful comprehension, his ready wit, the subtility of his reasoning, the extent of his memory, raised expectations of his career, which were soon dissipated by his mad and outrageous, rather than sensual course of pleasures. When he moved into the sphere of fashion to which his birth entitled him, it became his degrading boast that his mistress was the most expensive of her class; and that he could drink a greater quantity of wine, without intoxication, than any of his companions. Yet, in the midst of such associates as envied or extolled his supremacy, St. John never wholly lost that desire for better things, that love of knowledge, and value of intellectual excellence, which afterwards raised him from debasement, and which still ennoble his name, in spite of his unprincipled political career, and of the obliquity of his moral conduct.

It was not until the latter end of the reign of William, and after his first marriage, that Henry

St. John applied himself to politics. He was then twenty-eight years of age. Unhappily for him, he consulted what he deemed expediency (his guide through life) in the first respectable connexion that he formed. He married the daughter and co-heiress of Sir Henry Winchescomb, a descendant from the famous clothier, Jack of Newbury, who entertained Henry the Eighth and his suite. The union which St. John thought proper to form might have been considered prudent by his friends, but it proved adverse to all improvement in his domestic conduct. His wife, though commended for her personal and mental accomplishments, yet failed in fixing the gay, inconstant Bolingbroke. A separation ensued; and though much of the lady's fortune, which amounted to forty thousand pounds, became the portion of her husband, it was subsequently, with the exception of some estates, given back to her family after his attainder.

So far his worldly interests were concerned; but it was Bolingbroke's fate, in after life, to attach himself strongly to the wife of the Marquis de Villette, the niece of Madam de Maintenon, and to be truly, passionately, and long hopelessly attached. His jealousies, his uncertainties, the sickness of hope deferred, were a retribution to

his former indulgence of what are too lightly termed the pleasant vices; in which his vanity, perhaps his passions were concerned, but in which the heart participated not.

Bolingbroke entered parliament in 1700, as member for Wotton-Basset, on the Whig interest. His wife's connexions, as well as his own, had considerable influence in the political world. But the natural and acquired attributes of the young politician were far more potent than family influence, which can place a man in the national assembly, as one may plant a tree, but cannot make it grow, nor enable it to stand the wintry blast.

It was, perhaps, not among the least of Bolingbroke's advantages, that he was one of the handsomest men of his time. Notwithstanding the dissolute life which he had led up to the period of manhood's prime, when he became a noted politician, St. John retained a sweetness of countenance which usually belongs to innocence alone, combined with a dignity, the outward token of a high quality of mind, and perhaps the hereditary mark of ancient blood. His manner was eminently fascinating; and the awe which his acknowledged abilities might have inspired, was dispelled by a vivacity which,

strange as it may appear, has been almost invariably the accompaniment of the most profound thinkers, and of the most energetic actors on the stage of public life.

To these personal advantages, Bolingbroke, in the maturity of his intellect, added an astonishing penetration into the motives and dispositions of men. Perhaps he trusted too greatly to this faculty, for he was often deceived, where duller spirits might have perceived the truth. He possessed the art of acquiring an ascendency over all with whom he conversed. If he could not convince, he was contented to waive contention, and to gain his point by entertaining. His powers of eloquence, even in that age, when the art of rhetoric was sedulously cultivated, were supereminent. Perhaps the greatest merit of eloquence is perspicuity; and this Bolingbroke displayed in a very uncommon degree. A prodigious memory, the handmaid of oratory, did not ensnare him into the fault of pedantry, common to men so endowed. How admirably he has avoided this defect in his Letters on the Study of History, must be remembered with gratitude by those who have perhaps sat down to peruse the work with dread, but have arisen from it, not wearied, but delighted and informed.

His eloquence possessed the charm of a noble simplicity. Yet his language, although apparently only such as would be suggested to any person speaking familiarly on similar subjects, was selected with a skill the more refined that it could not be detected. Sometimes he would pause for a moment's reflection, when in the midst of an harangue; but the pause was succeeded by a full, clear, impassioned burst of eloquence, to which all the stores of his memory, the depth of his logic, and the elegance of a mind never debased, whatever might be his immoralities, contributed, like pellucid streams flowing into the one mighty torrent.*

It was in the dawn of his political career that St. John gained the approbation, almost the affection, of Marlborough.† Until after the defection of Harley from the ministry, Marlborough and Bolingbroke were more than political allies. The great general admired the talents of the young debater, and loved his society; as men who have lived long enough to appreciate all the various sorts of excellence, love the promise of the young, and hail its progress with almost prophetic accuracy. Bolingbroke, on the other hand, what-

* See Lives of St. John Lord Bolingbroke, by Goldsmith. Biog. Britannica, &c.

† Cunningham.

ever were the differences of after life, whatever the wrongs sustained by Marlborough, whatever his own tergiversation, reverenced, almost affectionately, the hero of Ramillies, — a victory achieved whilst he himself was in office. His eloquent tribute to the great hero's memory is well known.*

It has been supposed, and not without reason, that St. John was indebted both to the Duke of Marlborough and to Harley for his introduction to office, in 1704, as Secretary at War and of the Marine. That he considered himself chiefly bound in honour and gratitude to Harley, is evident from his resigning his post, upon the dismissal of that minister. A friendship of some years had, indeed, at the time of that event, subsisted between Harley and St. John. But it was a friendship such as worldly men could alone avow and endure; hollow, interested, and already verging into rivalry,—as the closest intimacies are found to be sometimes nearest to the deadliest hatred. Never was there an alliance, bearing the name of friendship, so ill assorted. Harley was a man of industry, research, method; a statesman of no extended views, yet an adept in the craft. His morals were, for his time, more than respectable, his integrity unimpeachable,

* Letters on History.

although it was not of a description suited to the nicer notions of our modern days. It was his aim to conciliate both Whigs and Tories; to maintain the Protestant succession, yet to conciliate the adverse courts of St. Germains. To effect his ends, he scrupled not to employ any means which appeared to him expedient. If not actually deceptive, he was, at any rate, constantly treading on the brink of that moral precipice, falschood: versed in all Parliamentary forms and records, he was at once an able leader of the House of Commons, as well as a consummate manager of courts.

Bolingbroke, on the other hand, with a less share of principle than Harley, displayed a decision and courage which bore the aspect of consistency and disinterestedness. His devotion to the Tories, which proved his ruin, caused him to disapprove the half measures of his friend and subsequent rival. Yet he was not wholly devoid of a deep, designing spirit; for Bolingbroke, though in this instance he misunderstood the general sentiments of the nation, yet was not deceived in the real, heartfelt secret wishes of his royal mistress, on which he relied.

At the period when the "great breach," as the Duchess of Marlborough called it, took place, Bolingbroke was, however, the warm adherent of

Harley; and in compliance with their mutual bond, he quitted office, after three years' enjoyment of its dignity and emoluments.*

* See Lives of Bolingbroke—Coxe, Burnet, Lediard.

CHAPTER VII.

1708—Vacillation of Anne—Invasion of the Pretender—Results of that event—Secret intrigues with Mrs. Masham—The death of Prince George—The Duchess of Marlborough's affectionate attentions to the Queen on that occasion—Her disappointment.

Not many days after the dismissal of Harley and the resignation of St. John, and whilst the world of politics was still occupied in discussing Gregg's ignominious life and courageous death, it was announced that a French fleet, with troops, had sailed from Dunkirk to invade Scotland.

James Stuart, or, as Queen Anne, for the first time after this attempt upon her kingdom, permitted him to be designated, the Pretender, was, however, luckily for himself, prevented from embarking with the squadron, just at the critical time, by an ague;* and the fleet was put back by contrary winds. When too late to do any good,

* Lediard, vol. ii. p. 9.

James set sail. The fleet, being chiefly filled with landsmen, was greatly distressed for want of water; and, after being tossed about for nearly a month in a tempestuous sea, was obliged to return to Dunkirk. Thus was this vast project, contrived by Louis with the design of drawing off the troops in Flanders, frustrated; nor would the French monarch have been inconsolable, had the Pretender fallen into the hands of the English, of which he ran an imminent risk; for Louis was not particularly anxious to see the unfortunate Prince again in France; and he would have been reconciled to the loss of his fleet, if he could have at the same time been relieved of his guest.* The attempt, however, proved nearly fatal to the Tory party in England: for it was believed that Louis would not have risked so small a fleet, and forces so incompetent as those which he sent over, had he not been well assured of assistance in England and Scotland.

On the other hand, the Queen, who was alarmed, and, according to her capability, indignant, on account of her brother's invasion, perceived the duplicity of those who had so recently assured her that there was not a single Jacobite in the nation. Never before this occurrence had her royal lips been known to mention the Revolution.

* Lediard, vol. ii. p. 9.

Her courtiers had universally endeavoured to separate her title to the throne from any connexion with that event; although she had no other claim to the crown than that which was given her by the Act of Settlement. The Queen now, as Parliament was sitting, addressed the Houses; she named the Revolution twice; she received addresses in which the word 'Pretender' was applied to her brother: she thus approved that designation, and from this period he is so called in the generality of histories.* She declared publicly that she considered those who had brought about the Revolution to be her best friends; and the Whigs as most to be depended upon for the support of her government. She looked to Marlborough for assistance, and, for the first time, cordially agreed with her general, that it was neither for her honour, nor interest, to make the first steps towards a peace.† She wrote to him in the most confidential and affectionate terms, signing herself his "humble servant;"‡ and she received from him a respectful and manly answer, assuring her Majesty that the Duke desired to serve his royal mistress "in the army, but not as a minister.§

For a while this good understanding lasted,

* Burnet, b. v. p. 384.
† Conduct, p. 214.
‡ Ibid. 216.
§ Ibid.

and the Whigs were sanguine of their entire restoration to royal favour; but, as the Queen's fears subsided, her inclinations returned to their old channel, and her mind yielded again to the influence of Harley.

That able and persevering courtier continued, during the whole summer after his dismissal, to entertain a secret correspondence with the Queen. Anne, whose nature was quite on a level with that of the most humble of her household, descended so far as to encourage these stolen conferences. The lessons which she had learned during her depression in the court of William and Mary were retained, when the same inducement to those small manœuvres no longer justified the stratagems which nothing but the dread of tyranny can excuse. To enjoy in privacy the gossip, for it could not be called society, of Mrs. Masham, and the flattery of Harley, "she staid," says the indignant Duchess, "all the sultry season, even when the Prince was panting for breath, in that small house she had formerly purchased at Windsor; which, though hot as an oven, was then said to be cool, because, from the park, such persons as Mrs. Masham had a mind to bring to her Majesty could be let in privately from the garden."*

* Conduct, p. 222.

The Duchess could not long endure this; and, upon the occasion of a thanksgiving for the victory of Oudenarde, and after the memorable siege of Brussels, her wrath broke forth. She still, in spite of her threats, held the office of groom of the stole, which brought her into frequent, unfortunate collision with the Queen. The efforts to please, which the haughty Duchess now condescended to make, were constantly counteracted by her rival. The following letter is truly characteristic. Pique, pride, effrontery, are curiously manifested in its expression.*

"I cannot help sending your Majesty this letter, to show how exactly Lord Marlborough agrees with me in my opinion, that he has now no interest with you; though, when I said so in the church on Thursday,† you were pleased to say it was untrue: and yet I think that he will be surprised to hear that, when I had taken so much pains to put your jewels in a way that I thought you would like, Mrs. Masham could make you refuse to wear them, in so unkind a manner; because that was a power she had not thought fit to exercise before. I will make no reflection upon it; only that I must needs observe that your Majesty chose a very wrong day to mortify me,

* Conduct, p. 219. † Aug. 19, 1708.

when you were just going to return thanks for a victory obtained by Lord Marlborough."

The Queen thought proper to answer this epistle in the following words. The contest had now arrived at its climax.

"Sunday.

"After the commands you gave me on the thanksgiving-day of not answering you, I should not have troubled you with these lines, but to return the Duke of Marlborough's letter safe into your hands, and for the same reason do not say anything to that, nor to yours enclosed with it."

It was impossible for the Duchess, on receiving so extraordinary a letter, to remain silent; and, in truth, she was one of those whom rebuke could not abash, nor argument silence, nor invective intimidate. She again took up the pen, not, as she assured her Majesty, with any view of answering the Queen's letter, but of explaining what she had said at church. This explanation, like most others, tended to make the matter considerably worse. "I desired you," says the Duchess, continuing to address the Queen in the character of an equal, "I desired you not to answer me there, for fear of being overheard; and this you interpret as if I had desired you not to answer

me at all, which was far from my intention. For the whole end of my writing to you so often, was to get your answer to several things in which we differed, that if I was in the wrong you might convince me of it, and I should very readily have owned my mistakes."

The Duchess proceeds to say, that she hopes that, some time or other, the Queen may find time to reflect upon the unanswerable arguments which the Duchess had laid before her, and that her Majesty would also occasionally listen to the advice of my Lord Marlborough, and then she would never more be troubled with disagreeable letters from her. "The word *command*," adds the Duchess, "which you use at the beginning of your letter, is very unfitly supposed to come from me. For though I have always writ to you as a friend, and lived with you as such for so many years, with all the truth, and honesty, and zeal for your service that was possible, yet I shall never forget that I am your subject, nor cease to be a faithful one." *

This correspondence appears to have had the effect only of widening the breach. It is one peculiarity of our sex, or, at any rate, of the least reflective portion, that the affections once alienated, cannot, by reasoning, by persuasion, even by concession, be restored to their accustomed channel. At

* Conduct, p. 222.

Anne's side there stood a whisperer ever ready to pour into the royal ear the antidote to all the medicine of too wholesome truth, which the Duchess, in her hardihood, dared to administer. It was indeed her boast, that when, without prejudice or passion, she knew the Queen to be wrong, she should think herself wanting in her duty not to tell her Majesty her opinion, "and the rather, because no one else dares to speak out upon so ungrateful a subject."

The poor Queen went on, therefore, much in the same state of indecision and mystery as that in which her life had been passed for years; closeted every night with Mrs. Masham and Harley, and watched at every avenue by the Duchess and her emissaries. When the ministry suspected that the Queen was under the influence of the discarded but dreaded Harley, the Duchess despatched a letter full of remonstrances and reproaches, written with her "usual plainness and zeal." But finding that by this mode she could make no impression upon her Majesty, the Duchess sought an interview, and begged to know what her crime was that had produced so great an alteration in the Queen. This inquiry drew from Anne a charge of inveteracy and of persecution against "poor Masham," and a declaration that the Queen would henceforth treat

the Duchess as it became her to treat the Duke of Marlborough's wife, and the groom of the stole; but she forbore specifying any distinct charge against the discarded favourite.

On receiving this letter, the Duchess began a work which it seems she had some time contemplated; namely, a careful review of all the faithful services which, for about twenty-six years, she had performed towards the Queen; of the favour with which she had been honoured, and of the use which she had made of that favour; and of the manner in which she had now lost it, by means of one whom she had raised out of the dust.* To savour her apology with some sacred associations, the Duchess prefixed to it the directions given by the author of "The Whole Duty of Man," with regard to friendship; and the directions in the Common Prayer before the Communion with regard to reconciliation, together with the rules laid down by Bishop Taylor on the same head; and in offering this memorial, the subdued, but not humiliated Duchess, gave her word to her Majesty, that if, after reading these compilations, she would please to answer in two words that she was still of her former opinion, she, the Duchess, would never more trouble her on that head as long as she lived, but would perform her offices with

* Preserved in the Coxe MSS. B. M., and given in the Appendix to this volume.

respect and decorum, remember always that Anne was her mistress and her Queen, and resolve to pay her the respect due from a faithful subject to a Queen.

This despatch was sent from St. Albans, and the Queen promised that she would read and answer it. But ten days afterwards the paper was unread, and the only consolation which the Duchess received for this negligence was a kind look and a gracious smile from her Majesty, as she passed to receive the communion; "but the smile and the look," adds the Duchess, "were, I had reason afterwards to think, given to Bishop Taylor and the Common Prayer Book, and not to me."

Meantime the Queen, after more than twenty-five years of matrimony, became a widow. Prince George, in October, sank under the effects of a long-continued asthma, which, during the last few years of his life, had kept him hovering on the brink of the grave. The Queen, who had been throughout the whole of her married life a pattern of domestic affection, had never, during the last trying years of his life, left the Prince either night or day. She attended him with assiduity, and proffered to her sick consort those patient services which are generally supposed only to be the meed of females in the humbler walks of life.

The Prince merited her affection; his manners were amiable, and his conduct respectable; and he had not embarrassed the Queen by taking a conspicuous share in politics. The "Monsieur est il possible" of King James was neither deficient in sense nor in information; but his powers of expression were inferior to his capacity for gaining knowledge.*

The Queen, unsentimental though well intentioned, plunged deeper and deeper into petty political intrigues, after the respectable occupation of tending her invalid husband was at an end. Her grief was as edifying as her conjugal affection had been exemplary; yet the parliament, not thinking it too late for such addresses, petitioned her Majesty that she would not allow her grief for the Prince's death to prevent her from contemplating a second marriage. But Anne continued to be, or, as some said, to seem inconsolable. She avoided the light of day, and could not endure the conversation of her dearest friends, but seemed, as in affliction it is natural so to do, to revert to those companions of her earlier years who had witnessed the felicity of her married life.

Several weeks had elapsed since the Queen and the Duchess had met, when the latter was

* Burnet, vol. iv. p. 247.

apprised that the existence of the Prince of Denmark was drawing to a close. The Duchess, warm in her temper, warm in her feelings, wrote on this occasion to her royal mistress to express her determination to pay her duty, in inquiring after her Majesty's health, and to declare that she could not hear of so great a misfortune and affliction as the condition in which the Prince was, without offering her services, if acceptable to her Majesty.

This letter was scarcely penned, before further tidings of the Prince's danger arrived; and the Duchess, setting off for Kensington, carried her letter with her, and sent it to the Queen, with a message that she waited her Majesty's commands. Anne could scarcely be much flattered by a tribute of respect, which was prefaced by the Duchess with these offensive words:—"Though, the last time I had the honour to wait upon your Majesty, your usage of me was such as was scarce possible for me to imagine, or for any one to believe," &c. &c. She received her haughty subject "coolly, and as a stranger." The Duchess, however, touched by her royal mistress's impending calamity, persevered. It was her lot, after witnessing the nuptials of the Queen with the Prince of Denmark, and after participating for years in their sober privacy, to be present at his

last moments. It was her office to lead the Queen from the chamber of death into her closet, where, kneeling down, the Duchess endeavoured affectionately to console the widowed sovereign, remaining for some time before her in that posture of humiliation.

The Queen's conduct in this peculiar situation, and at this critical moment, was singularly characteristic of her feeble, vacillating character, on which no strong impression could be made. Whilst the Duchess knelt before her, imploring her Majesty not to cherish sorrow, by remaining where the remembrance of the recent solemn scene would haunt her, but to retire to St. James's; whilst the arrogant but warm-hearted Duchess forgot all past grievances in her attempts to solace a mistress from whom she had received many favours; the poor Queen's fluttered spirits were affrighted by the recollection of Mrs. Masham, and of the party who would resent this long and private interview. She yielded, however, to the Duchess's remonstrances, and promised to accompany her to St. James's; and, placing her watch in the Duchess's hand, bade her retire until the finger of that monitor had reached a certain point, and to send Mrs. Masham in the interval. A crowd was collected before the antechamber, and the Duchess, emerging

from the royal closet, determined, though the game was lost, at least not to betray her defeat. She behaved on this occasion with the address, and dignity, and self-command, which a knowledge of her own well-meant intentions, and her long experience in the world, imparted. She ordered her own coach to be prepared for the reception of the Queen, and desired the assembled courtiers to retire, whilst her Majesty, amidst her complicated feelings of grief and embarrassment, should pass through the gallery. The Queen, moved like a puppet to the last by the spirited and intellectual woman who was formed to command, came forth, leaning on the arm of the Duchess. "Your Majesty," said the lofty Sarah, "must excuse my not delivering your message to Mrs. Masham; your Majesty can send for her at St. James's, how and when you please."

The Queen, apparently insensible to the spirit of this reply, or preoccupied by fears as to what "poor Masham" would think, moved along the gallery, whispering some commission to Mrs. Hill, the sister of Mrs. Masham, as she went along, and casting upon Mrs. Masham, who appeared in the gallery with Dr. Arbuthnot, a look of kindness, though without speaking. She was sufficiently composed, on entering the carriage, to intimate to Godolphin that she wished the

royal vaults at Westminster to be inspected previous to the interment of the Prince, in order to ascertain whether there would be room for her body also,—if not, to choose another place of interment; and in these topics the drive from Kensington to St. James's was occupied. It was not thought by the Queen incompatible with the deep feeling which she professed, to busy herself with those minutiæ to which minds of a common stamp affix so much importance, connected with the disposition of the dead.—The Duchess has commented upon the Queen's particularities, with the freedom natural to her. After a conference with Lord Godolphin at St. James's, during which the Duchess retired, the Queen, to use her own expression, "scratched twice at dear Mrs. Freeman's door," in hopes of finding the Lord Treasurer within the Duchess's apartments, in order to bid him, when he sent his orders to Kensington, order a great number of yeomen of the guard to be in attendance to carry the "dear Prince's body" down the great stairs, which were very steep and slippery, so that it might "not be let fall."

The transient reconciliation which thus took place between the Queen and the Duchess was not of long duration. Mrs. Masham, indeed,

retired that same evening from the supper-room, where the Duchess appeared to attend upon her Majesty; and Anne cautiously forbore to mention "poor Masham's" hateful name. But when in private, Anne was almost continually attended by the insidious Abigail, and the Duchess rarely entered the royal presence without finding her rival there, or, what was worse, retiring furtively at her approach; and she soon ascertained that the very closet where she had knelt in sorrow and compassion before her sovereign—where she had striven to act the part of consolation—was the scene of Mrs. Masham's influence. It seemed, indeed, strange that Anne should select for her daily sitting-room the closet which her deceased consort had used as his place of retirement and prayer, and the prying Duchess soon penetrated behind the screen of widowed proprieties. She has laid bare the occupations of the royal mourner, whilst closeted for many hours of the day in Prince George's apartments. The Duchess, indeed, suspected that some peculiar motive could alone induce Anne to disregard the mournful associations with that retreat; and resolving to ascertain the cause, she had the mortification to discover the true reason of Anne's choice: this was, that the "back-stairs belonging to it

came from Mrs. Masham's lodgings, who, by that means, could bring to her whom she pleased." *

* Conduct. Also Narrative, by the Duchess, of the events which took place after the Prince of Denmark's death. Coxe, vol. iv. p. 234.

CHAPTER VIII.

Trial of Dr. Sacheverell—His solemn protestation of innocence—Scene behind the curtain where the Queen sat—Fresh offence given by the Duchess to Anne.—1709—1710.

THE year 1709, which witnessed the almost final alienation of the Queen from her early favourite, was disgraced by the strange spectacle of Dr. Henry Sacheverell's trial, his punishment, and triumph.

A celebrated female historian has well observed, that it is difficult to say "which is most worthy of ridicule,—the ministry, in arming all the powers of government in their attack upon an obscure individual, or the public, in supporting a culprit whose doctrine was more odious than his insolence, and his principles yet more contemptible than his parts." *

* Macauley. History of England from the Revolution, p. 218.

This "trumpeter of sedition," as Cunningham calls him, or, according to the ladies and other zealous partisans of his day, this persecuted saint, was a preacher of little merit, but of great pretensions; who, in a discourse delivered on the fifth of November, 1709, at St. Paul's cathedral, attacked Queen Elizabeth, decried the authors of the Revolution, abused the ministers of the reigning sovereign, and upheld the doctrines of divine right, in one "incoherent jumble," at once passionate, ill constructed, and, one would have supposed, innocuous.

The subsequent trial and conviction of this agitator of the unsettled times in which he lived, have been copiously detailed in history. There has doubtless been many a more solemn, but there assuredly never was a more singular scene than that which was exhibited in Westminster Hall on the day of his trial. A court was prepared exactly in the form of a tribunal in the House of Lords, and seats were placed for the peers. The Queen herself attended, as a private individual, in a box placed near the throne, with a curtain drawn between her and the assembly. The hero of the piece, Dr. Sacheverell, came forward to the bar with Dr. Atterbury and Dr. Smalridge, two Tory prelates, and made his obeisance to the court,

with all the effrontery and indifference which marked his whole career.

The court was thronged without by an infuriated mob, ready to wreak, in deeds of vengeance, the excitement which they called religious zeal, on the opposing party, should Sacheverell suffer the penalties of the misdemeanors with which he was charged. Within, the enclosure of the stately pile was lined with ladies of rank, who dreaded, says Cunningham, lest the "Observer" or the "Tatler" should satirise their dress and conduct; yet none who could enter, absented themselves from a scene so full of interest and diversion. The known inclination of the Queen to favour the doctrines advanced by Sacheverell, however preposterous and derogatory to her own right, induced many fair politicians, who went to see and to be seen, to harass their minds with discussions upon those knotty points, the fallaciousness of which it is far better to leave to practical experience to prove, than to seek to expose by arguments which only inflame the passions.

All listened with interest to the numerous charges, amongst which was the grave accusation of having plainly called the Lord High Treasurer of this kingdom "Volpone;" but, after the ela-

borate and learned speeches made in this famous cause by the managers of the House of Commons ; when the lawyers and judges had been duly listened to,—after the doctor's own counsel had spoken, he himself replied to the charges in an able oration, stated not to be his own. After expatiating upon the dignity of the holy order to which he belonged, he called solemnly upon the Searcher of hearts to witness that he entertained no seditious designs, and was wholly innocent of the crimes alleged against him. When he had concluded, a general sentiment of indignation pervaded the assembly. The Countess of Sunderland, pious, sincere, young in the ways of a corrupt court, was so affected by this appeal to God, that she could not help shedding tears at what she believed to be falsehood and blasphemy.*

Sacheverell, however, returned in triumph to his lodgings in the Temple; and his sentence, which was suspension from preaching for three years, though not so severe as had been contemplated, was followed by riots, both in London and in the country, similar in spirit and outrage to the famous disturbances which Lord George Gordon, a fanatic less reprehensible, and of less political importance, contrived many years afterwards to excite.

* Cunningham.

But the Whigs, unhappily, had failed in this trial of their power, and had foolishly betrayed their weakness. The Duke of Marlborough, who had recommended the prosecution of Sacheverell, "lest he should preach him and his party out of the kingdom," must have repented, when it was too late, the adoption of counsels which hastened on the crisis that approached. Happily for the common sense of the nation, Sacheverell, intoxicated by the applause of the multitude, soon showed his motives and character in their true light. He paraded the country, intermeddling with the affairs of others, and assuming a sort of spiritual authority wherever he went. He performed a tour to congratulate his party on his and their common safety; and, as is usual, alas for womankind! his proselytes, his confidantes, the compassionate consolers for the contumacy which he received from men worthy of the name, were all misled, devoted, prejudiced women.

The Duke of Argyll, who had opposed his sentence, hearing that Sacheverell was going to call upon him to return him thanks, refused to receive him or his acknowledgments. "Tell him," said the Duke, "that what I did in parliament was not done for his sake."*

The Duchess of Marlborough, constrained by

* Cunningham, book ii. p. 300.

the duties of her office to wait upon the Queen, was present during the whole of the trial of Sacheverell; and whilst the assembled throng in court were intent upon the scene below the bar, small intrigues for favour and secret heart-burnings were carried on behind that curtain, screened by which, her Majesty sat to hear the singular proceedings in court. The Duchess has given the following account of the new causes of offence which she was so unfortunate as to give to her Majesty.*

"This was at Dr. Sacheverell's trial, where I waited upon the Queen the first time she went thither, and having stood above two hours, said to the vice-chamberlain, that when the Queen went to any place incognito (as she came to the trial, and only looked from behind a curtain) it was always the custom for the ladies to sit down before her; but her Majesty had forgot to speak to us now; and that since the trial was like to

* MS. Letter to Mr. Hutchinson. This curious and natural account of an amusing scene is contained in a manuscript Vindication of the Duchess, addressed to Mr. Hutchinson, preserved in the Coxe MSS. in the British Museum, and has never before been quoted or published.—See Coxe Papers, vol. xliv. p. 2. "The good-nature yet weakness of Anne's character is strongly exemplified in the details in the text.

continue very long every day, I wished he would put the Queen in mind of it: to which he replied very naturally, 'Why, madam, should you not speak to the Queen yourself, who are always in waiting?'

"This I knew was right, and therefore I went up to the Queen, and stooping down to her as she was sitting, to whisper to her, said, 'I believed her Majesty had forgot to order us to sit, as was customary in such cases.' Upon this, she looked indeed as if she had forgot, and was sorry for it, and answered in a very kind easy way, 'By all means, pray sit;' and, before I could go a step from her chair, she called to Mr. Mordaunt, the page of honour, to bring stools, and desire the ladies to sit down, which accordingly we did—Lady Scarborough, Lady Burlington, and myself. But as I was to sit nearest to the Queen, I took care to place myself at a good distance from her, though it was usual in such cases to sit close to her, and sometimes at the basset table, where she does not appear incognito; but, in a place of ceremony, the company has sat so near her as scarce to leave her room to put her hand to her pocket. Besides this, I used a further caution, of showing her all the respect I could in this matter, by drawing a curtain behind me in such a manner, betwixt her and me, as to appear to be

as it were in a different room from her Majesty. But my Lady Hyde,* who stood behind the Queen when I went to speak to her, (and who I observed, with an air of boldness more than good breeding, came up then nearer to hear what I said,) continued to stand still in the same manner, and never came to sit with the rest of us that day, which I then took for nothing else but the making show of more than ordinary favour with the Queen.

"The next day the Duchess of Somerset came to the trial, and before I sat down I turned to her, having always used to show her a great deal of respect,† and asked her if her grace would not

* Lady Hyde, afterwards Countess of Rochester, from whom the Duchess states herself to have received many affronts on the back-stairs.—Coxe MSS. vol. 44.

† The Duchess of Somerset, wife of the proud Duke of Somerset, so called from his excessive pride of rank and ostentation, was a Percy; and, as such, considered to merit precedence, and great deference, both by her husband and by the Duchess of Marlborough, who always called her "the great lady." There seems to have been a friendly understanding between the two Duchesses, for Mr. Maynwaring, in one of his letters to the Duchess of Marlborough, says, "I am glad the Duke and Duchess of Somerset were to dine with you, for notwithstanding the faults of the one, and the spirit of Percy blood in the other, I think they both naturally love and esteem you very much."—Coxe MSS. vol. xli. p. 248.

be pleased to sit; at which she gave a sort of start back, with the appearance of being surprised, as if she thought I had asked a very strange thing, and refused sitting. Upon this I said it was always the custom to sit before the Queen in such cases, and that her Majesty had ordered us to do so the day before, but that her refusing it now looked as if she thought we had done something that was not proper. To which she only answered, that she did not care to sit; and then she went and stood behind the Queen, as Lady Hyde had done the day before, which I took no farther notice of then, but sat down with my Lady Burlington as we did before. But when I came to reflect upon what these two ladies had done, I plainly perceived that, in the Duchess of Somerset especially, this conduct could not be thought to be the effect of humility, but that it must be a stratagem that they had formed in their cabal, to flatter the Queen by paying her more respect, and to make some public noise of this matter that might be to my disadvantage, or disagreeable to me.

"And this I was still the more confirmed in, because it had been known before that the Duchess of Somerset, who was there with her lord, was to act a cunning part between the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. The

Whigs and Tories did not intend to come to the trial.

"As, therefore, it was my business to keep all things as quiet as possible till the campaign was over, and preserve myself in the mean while, if I could, from any public affront, I resolved to do what I could to disappoint these ladies in their little design; and in order to this, I waited upon the Queen the next morning, before she went to the trial, and told her that I had observed, the day before, that the Duchess of Somerset had refused to sit at the trial, which I did not know the meaning of, since her Majesty was pleased to order it, and it was nothing more than what was agreeable to the constant practice of the court in all such cases; but however, if it would be in any respects more pleasing to her Majesty that we should stand for the future, I begged she would let me know her mind about it, because I should be very sorry to do anything that could give her the least dissatisfaction. To this she answered, with more peevishness than was natural to her, in these words: '*If I had not liked you should sit, why should I have ordered it?*'

"This plainly showed that the cabal had been blowing her up, but that she could not, however, contradict her own order. What she had now said was still a further confirmation of it, and

made it more difficult for the cabal to proceed any farther in this matter, and therefore the next day the Duchess of Ormond and Lady Fretchwell came to the trial, and, to my great surprise, sat down amongst the rest of us. And thus this matter ended; only that the Duchess of Somerset used some little arts afterwards, which are not worth mentioning, to sweeten me again, and cover her design, which I suppose now she was ashamed of."*

Whilst proceedings were pending against Sacheverell, the Queen's design, to disgust her ministers and to induce them to resign, became apparent. Notwithstanding the open warfare between "poor Masham" and the Duchess, Anne, upon a vacancy occurring, wrote to the Duke of Marlborough to obtain the colonelcy of a regiment for Mr. Hill, the brother of that Abigail who had undermined all the Duke's greatness, and put to flight the small portion of the Duchess's forbearance.

Of this scion of the notable family to whom he belonged, the Duchess has given an account in her Vindication. Jack Hill, as she calls him, was a younger brother of Mrs. Masham, and, like the rest of the family, was provided for by the Duchess.

* MS. Letter. Coxe Papers, p. 44.

The occupations which these dependent relations held were suitable to their lowly conditions, and, as the Duchess seemed to think, to the inferiority of their condition to her own. It has been already specified how she had provided for them. The younger sister had, as we have seen, been appointed by the Duke of Marlborough laundress to the Duke of Gloucester, and, when that prince died, had received a pention of two hundred a year out of the privy purse, coming directly from the Duchess's hands. The elder brother obtained, through the Duke's interest, a place in the Custom-house; and upon security being required, previously to his being promoted to a more responsible situation, the Duchess persuaded a relation of the Duke's to be guarantee for that sum.

Thus had she laboured successfully to provide for these indigent relations, who afterwards proved briers in her path of life. Mrs. Masham, the elder sister, whom she had treated as her sister, and to whom she had given an asylum in her house, availed herself of opportunities to supplant her. It was the fortune of "honest Jack Hill," as his boon companions called him, to bring a second humiliation upon the Duke his patron.

Years had passed away since these favours

had been shown to Mr. Hill, and he was now a partisan of those who were foes to his benefactors, having long since forgotten by whose means he was raised from abject poverty to respectability.

It was concerning the promotion of Mr. Hill to the command of a regiment, vacant by the death of the Earl of Essex, that the first open rupture between the Queen and the Duke of Marlborough occurred. The plot which Harley and the Masham party had woven, appeared now, according to the opinions of the Duchess, in undisguised colours. Already had they induced the Queen to prefer bishops who were not acceptable to the ministry; and it was now their successful aim to lead her Majesty into another snare. They therefore persuaded her to make military appointments without the consent of her general; and the choice of Mr. Hill for the purpose of mortifying the Duke was, it must be allowed, eminently successful, if they wished to lower the authority of that great commander. A double design was thus intended. If the Duke permitted his relative's promotion, the whole army would feel the injustice done to their profession; if he resisted it, it would lend new force to the arguments by which the weak and credulous mind of Anne was perpetually assailed,

namely, that she was but a cipher in the hands of the Marlborough family; and thus, the Duke and his wife were by the same dexterous arrangement equally injured, or at any rate insulted.

The wary but high-minded Duke resented this measure loftily and stoutly. He waited at first on her Majesty, and endeavoured respectfully to change her resolution, by representing the injustice which the promotion of a young and untried officer would be deemed by the army. He argued earnestly upon the encouragement which would be given to the party adverse to the ministry, by promoting Mrs. Masham's brother. But he could extract from the sullen Queen no kind expression, and only the cautious reply, "That the Duke would do well to consult with his friends."* Godolphin, at this time writhing under the agonies of a mortal disorder, which his cares and vexations must have aggravated, went also to the Queen, and sought by persuasion to change her obstinate, Stuart-like determination; but without success.

Marlborough, indignant, left London, on the fifteenth of January, on a council day. Her Majesty took no notice of his absence; but the world spoke resentfully of an injustice done to their great and once popular general; and the

* Conduct, p. 230.

House of Commons testified by some votes their sense of the impropriety of Anne's conduct. Eventually she was obliged to yield; for her new counsellors perceived that they had gone too far, and her Majesty was obliged to write word to the Duke that he might dispose of the regiment as he thought fit, and also to order his return to court, and to "assure him that he had no ground for suspicion of change in her Majesty's good intentions."*

This seeming disposition to relent in favour of the Marlborough family was, however, the effect of a deep policy. Anne, naturally obstinate, and close in her expressions, had been taught lessons of duplicity, and rendered more than ever the tool of a faction. Mrs. Masham's influence was, indeed, becoming too notorious to be endured, not only by the Whigs, but by men of influence and popularity, who were not especially attached to either party. The sway of the lofty and arbitrary Duchess had been, for many reasons, endured with a degree of patience which the world could not extend to her rival. The great associations with the name of Churchill, the extensive patronage which the Duke and his Duchess possessed, the intermarriages of their beautiful and admired

* Conduct, p. 230.

daughters into families of influence; and perhaps, not least of all, the habit into which society had grown of considering the rule of the Marlborough family as indestructible, had lessened the disgust which men evince towards female domination, and had reconciled the public mind to that of which all could complain, but of which none could anticipate the decline. Besides, there was something imposing in the ascendency which the high-bred and intellectual Duchess haughtily assumed—something almost magnificent in the unfair, yet lofty habit of rule which suited her so well, and to which she seemed born. The Duke, by common acclamation the first of subjects, seemed to merit such a companion, such an ornament of his greatness, a star always conspicuous in its steady brilliancy on the political horizon.

But when the artful, humble, prudent Mrs. Masham crept into royal favour, and planted herself behind that throne near which the Duchess had proudly stood, the odious features of intrigue appeared despicable in comparison with the fearless demeanour, and open defiance of her enemies, which the Duchess had exhibited. Anne, that automaton moved successively by secret springs of different construction and power, seemed to the world to have degenerated

in her greatness when she fell into the meaner hands of the lowliest of her waiting women, one who had been a "rocker" in the royal household, scarcely of gentle blood, and whose ready subserviency spoke so plainly of her early initiation into those prying, petty ways which a long apprenticeship in the services, still menial, of the royal bedchamber, was likely to produce.

It was during the heat of Sacheverell's business, and before that notable comedy had been brought to a close, that several of the privy counsellors, disgusted by Mrs. Masham's influence, consulted privately as to the expediency of moving an address for her dismissal from the royal confidence.* These conferences, which were held late at night, were kept profoundly secret. They were attended by Lords Somers, Wharton, Halifax, and Sunderland, the Chancellor Cowper, and the Lord Treasurer. Halifax and Wharton, the most violent of the party, with all duty to the Queen, are said to have insisted modestly, that evil counsellors of one sex might be as well removed from the royal councils as those of another, by the advice of parliament. Somers, Godolphin, and Cowper were of a different opinion, and judged that such a remonstrance could not be made, consistently with the

* Cunningham, b. xii. p. 279.

laws of the land. Sunderland was violent and impatient, and bitterly inveighed against the moderation of Somers, formerly his oracle, but now no longer able to control the rash spirit of his once enthusiastic votary. Marlborough, also, resisted the impetuosity of his son-in-law; and whilst he had proved himself capable of frustrating, by manly determination, the arch enemy's plans, resolved, with Somers, to wait until a favourable opportunity of annihilating her influence should occur; not, unconstitutionally, to force the Queen to abandon her favourite, as Sunderland required. Even in his chariot, when setting off for Holland, Marlborough is reported to have refused the importunities of his son-in-law.*

The Queen, meantime, fearing, lest some motion relative to Mrs. Masham should be made in parliament, rallied her friends around her, and occupied herself in sundry closetings, which included many avowed enemies to the Revolution, and gave, says the Duchess, "encouragement to the Jacobites, who were now observed running to court, with faces as full of business as if they were going to get the government into their hands."

The Queen, elated with the notion infused into

* Cunningham, b. xii. p. 279.

her, that she was by these preferences gaining a victory over the Marlborough family, became more and more estranged from one to whom she had, in her ignorance of the meaning of the word, professed true friendship. It was reported, that as the peers returned out of her closet, she said to them severally, "If ever any recommendation of mine was of weight among you, as I know many of them have been, I hope this one may be specially regarded." * It is difficult to say whether, at this time, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough were most injured by their professed friends, or by avowed enemies. It is, perhaps, a problem which we may often vainly endeavour, in our progress through life, to solve, whether injudicious zeal or open enmity should most inspire us with apprehension. Enthusiasm in friendship is the parent of indiscretion; and what is termed devotion, in a human sense, has so often as its source a fund of selfishness, that we are apt to consider ourselves safer when encountering indifference, than when constrained to bend to the persuasions of ardent attachment.

Godolphin was, undoubtedly, amongst all the band of adherents, the only true friend whom the Duke and Duchess possessed. His attachment to them was genuine; their confidence in

* Cunningham, b. xii. p. 279.

him was entire. No variations of temper—no differences of opinion, seem to have disturbed that perfect accordance in sentiment, that respectful admiration on one side, and that reposing of every thought or wish on the other, which is the true elysium of affectionate hearts. Godolphin now experienced, in the decline of his fortunes, the mutability of all other friendships, the hollowness and selfishness of public men. It is easy to the interested to persuade themselves that they really contemn those who are not only no longer useful to them, but whose friendship might even be prejudicial. The Duke of Somerset, once the friend of Marlborough, as his Duchess had been of the Duchess—a man of great pride, and of considerable influence—now seceded from his once intimate associates, piqued by the Duke's refusing a regiment to his son. The Duke of Argyll and the Earl of Rivers had already made a friendly compact to divide between them the offices which they expected soon to be vacant, on the disgrace or resignation of Marlborough. Other noblemen were drawn in by their necessities to desert to the opposite party. But the most remarkable defection from the Whig party was that of the Duke of Shrewsbury, the early friend of Lord Somers, but now the partisan of Harley, the associate of Swift, and the husband of a Roman Catholic wife, an Italian

lady, who had followed him to Augsburg from Rome, and whose ardent passion for the accomplished Shrewsbury had induced him to make her Duchess of Shrewsbury.

The influence of these noblemen, joined to the enmity of others, amply sufficed, with the Queen's aid, to level the fortunes of the Marlborough family. Before the trial of Sacheverell, it was even expected that the Duke would resign all the offices which he held, except the command of the army, which could not, without injury to the cause of the continental confederates, be surrendered to his political foes. But the Duke could not, without a struggle, relinquish the cherished honours which had been long the aim of his arduous life, to which he had looked as the reward of a career of exertion wholly unexampled. His feelings at this crisis may be readily conceived. Stung to the heart, sick of courts, of princes, and of politicians, it is said that he contemplated the resignation of all his civil offices, yet not without a compromise; but that he could not bring himself to give up that military command, which, says an historian, "no good man envied him."*

Harley, meantime, was sedulously availing himself of an opportunity to work up his way to the ephemeral and precarious power which he

* Cunningham, book xii. p. 282.

afterwards enjoyed so little, and with so much personal risk. During the ferment which the trial of Sacheverell produced, he courted familiarity with persons of all persuasions. He fasted with the prime zealots of the different sects, or he invited the more convivial believer. He promised all that was asked of him; he dispersed hopes and expectations around him; yet kept his own designs secret, except to those whom he could confidently trust.

The Duchess, meantime, before resigning her offices, made one effort more to win back the Queen's lost regard, or at any rate to efface from her Majesty's mind every impression unfavourable to her. She had heard that Anne was given to understand that she spoke disrespectfully of her in company; and as she knew herself to be innocent of this charge, she waited on her Majesty on the third of April, 1710, and entreated to be favoured with a private interview. Three several hours were named by the Duchess, when she knew her Majesty to be usually alone; but the Queen appointed six o'clock in the afternoon, the time for prayers, when there was little probability of finding her Majesty at home for any private conversation. But even this appointment was broken, and a note was sent from the Queen, to command that whatever the Duchess

should have to say, should be put into writing, "and to beg her to gratify herself by going into the country as soon as she could." The Duchess waited on the Queen, and used all the arguments she could to obtain a private hearing, adding, "that she was now going out of town for a long time, and should perhaps never have occasion to trouble her Majesty again as long as she lived." The Queen still refused her request several times, "in a manner hard to be described," but yielded, so far as to appoint the next day after dinner: yet, on the following morning, this appointment was broken also, and another note from her Majesty arrived, telling the Duchess that she was going to Kensington to dinner, and desiring her to put her thoughts in writing.

These weak pretexts either prove that Harley and Mrs. Masham still dreaded a revival of the long-asserted influence which they had successfully combated, and that Anne was the undignified tool of their manœuvres—or they betray the Queen's dread of again encountering the earnest, and, doubtless, violent disputant, whose "commands" in the chapel royal were still fresh in the royal memory. Stouter nerves than those of the weak and harassed Queen may have been shaken by the lofty, and at times not very courteous demeanour of the Duchess.

Persevering in her attempt, the Duchess again wrote to the Queen, and again pressed an interview, assuring her Majesty that she would give her no uneasiness, but only clear herself from charges which had been wrongfully made against her; adding, that if the afternoon were not inconvenient, she would come every day and wait until her Majesty would allow her an interview. The particulars of this remarkable scene would lose much of the diversion which they must necessarily produce, if given in any other language than in that of the chief actor in the comedy.*

"Upon the sixth of April," says the Duchess, "I followed this letter to Kensington, and by that means prevented the Queen's writing again to me, as she was preparing to do. The page who went in to acquaint the Queen that I was come to wait upon her, stayed longer than usual; long enough, it is to be supposed, to give time to deliberate whether the favour of admission should be granted, and to settle the measures of behaviour if I were admitted. But at last he came out, and told me I might go in. As I was entering, the Queen said, she was just going to write to me; and when I began to speak, she interrupted me four or five times with these repeated words,

* Conduct, from p. 238 to 244.

'*whatever you have to say, you may put in writing.*' I said, her Majesty never did so hard a thing to any as to refuse to hear them speak, and assured her that I was not going to trouble her upon the subject which I knew to be so ungrateful to her, but that I could not possibly rest until I had cleared myself from some particular calumnies with which I had been loaded. I then went on to speak, (though the Queen turned away her face from me,) and to represent my hard case; that there were those about her Majesty who had made her believe that I had said things about her, which I was no more capable of saying than of killing my own children; that I seldom named her Majesty in company, and never without respect, and the like. The Queen said, *without doubt there were many lies told.* I then begged, in order to make this trouble the shorter, and my own innocence the plainer, that I might know the particulars of which I had been accused; because if I were made to appear guilty, and if I were innocent, this method only could clear me. The Queen replied that *she would give me no answer*, laying hold on a word in my letter, that what I had to say in my own vindication *would have no consequence in obliging her Majesty to answer, &c.;* which surely did not at all imply that I did not desire to know the particular things laid to my

charge, without which it was impossible for me to clear myself. This I assured her Majesty was all I desired, and *that I did not ask the names of the authors or relators of those calumnies*; saying all that I could reasonable to enforce my just request. But the Queen repeated again and again the words she had used, without ever receding; and it is probable that this conversation would never have been consented to, but that her Majesty had been carefully provided with those words, as a shield to defend her against every reason I could offer. I protested to her Majesty, that I had no design, in giving her this trouble, to solicit the return of her favour, but that my sole view was to clear myself, which was too just a design to be wholly disappointed by her Majesty. Upon this the Queen offered to go out of the room, I following her, begging leave to clear myself; and the Queen repeating over and over again, '*You desired no answer, and shall have none.*' When she came to the door, I fell into great disorder; streams of tears flowed down against my will, and prevented my speaking for some time. At length I recovered myself, and appealed to the Queen, in the vehemence of my concern, whether I might not still have been happy in her Majesty's favour, if I could have contradicted or dissembled my real opinion of men or things?

whether I had ever, in the whole course of our long friendship, told her one lie, or played the hypocrite once? whether I had offended in anything, except in a very zealous pressing upon her that which I thought necessary for her service or security? I then said I was informed by a very reasonable and credible person about the court, that things were laid to my charge of which I was wholly incapable; that the person knew that such stories were perpetually told to her Majesty to incense her, and had begged of me to come and vindicate myself; the same person had thought me of late guilty of some omissions towards her Majesty, being entirely ignorant how uneasy to her my frequent attendance must be, after what had happened between us. I explained some things which I had heard her Majesty had taken amiss of me; and then with a fresh flood of tears, and a concern sufficient to move compassion, even where all love was absent, I begged to know what other particulars she had heard of me, that I might not be denied all power of justifying myself. But still the only return was, '*You desired no answer, and you shall have none.*' I then begged to know if her Majesty would tell me some other time? '*You desired no answer, and you shall have none.*' I then appealed to her Majesty again, if she did not herself know

that I had often despised interest, in comparison of serving her faithfully and doing right? and whether she did not know me to be of a temper incapable of disowning anything which I knew to be true? '*You desired no answer, and you shall have none.*' This usage was severe, and these words so often repeated were so shocking, (being an utter denial of common justice to me, who had been a most faithful servant, and now asked nothing more,) that I could not conquer myself, but said the most disrespectful thing I ever spoke to the Queen in my life, and yet, what such an occasion and such circumstances might well excuse, if not justify: and that was, that I was confident her Majesty would suffer for such an instance of inhumanity. The Queen answered, '*That will be to myself.*' "*

"Thus," observes the Duchess, "ended this remarkable conversation, the last that I ever had with her Majesty. I shall make no comment on it. Yet," she adds, with her inherent magnanimity, "the Queen always meant well, however much soever she may be blinded or misguided." And she adds to this temperate observation a passage from a letter of her husband's, the Duke, written about eight months before, in which she says,

* See another account of this scene, in Private Correspondence of the Duke of Marlborough, vol. i. p. 295.

"There is something so pertinent to the present occasion, that I cannot forbear transcribing the passage."*

"It has always been my observation in disputes, especially in that of kindness and friendship, that all reproaches, though ever so just, serve to no end but making the breach wider. I cannot help being of opinion that, however insignificant we may be, there is a Power above that puts a period to our happiness or unhappiness. If anybody had told me eight years ago, that after such great success, and after you had been a faithful servant for twenty-seven years, that even in the Queen's lifetime we should be obliged to seek happiness in a retired life, I could not have believed that possible."

* Conduct, p. 244.

CHAPTER IX.

Final separation between the Queen and the Duchess—Some anecdotes of Dr. and Mrs. Burnet—Dr. Burnet remonstrates with the Queen—The Queen's obstinacy—Dismissal of Lord Godolphin—Letter from the Duchess to the Queen.—1710.

THE Queen and the Duchess never met again. But, in the midst of enemies, there were not wanting friends, faithful to the Duchess, and true to the Queen and constitution, who ventured to remonstrate with her Majesty upon the hazardous change in her counsels which her whole demeanour augured.

Amongst those who privately and earnestly pointed out the impending dangers and difficulties, was the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Burnet, who has done ample justice to the "economy and fidelity of the Duchess to the Queen, and justice to those who dealt with the crown," which

the Duchess of Marlborough manifested in her brilliant, but arduous career.*

Dr. Burnet had been assimilated with the Duchess in political, and in what was then considered almost as the same thing, religious, opinions. A close intimacy existed between the Duchess and the exemplary and third wife of the excellent prelate, the last of his three consorts, all of whom had been distinguished either in rank, in piety, or attainments. Mrs. Burnet took an active part in the concerns of the Duchess, who frequently communicated with her, and received letters in return, discussing the topics which then agitated the world, within the precincts of the court. At this time a staid matron of nine-and-forty, Mrs. Burnet could well remember the agitated times of James the Second, during whose reign she had retired with her first husband, Mr. Berkley of Spetchley Castle, Worcestershire, to Holland, to avoid the calamitous scenes which she expected to witness, and had remained at the Hague until the Revolution. Distinguished for piety, benevolence, and virtue, it was the lot of Mrs. Berkley, after a happy union with her first husband, to be left an opulent widow, in the prime of life. It was her choice to devote herself,

* Burnet's History, b. iv. vol. vi. p. 314.

for the seven years of that isolated, but possibly not dreary state, to works of charity, and to studies which would have adorned the leisure of the learned lords of creation. By her exertions, schools for the poorer classes, then little regarded in general, were established in the neighbourhood of Worcester and Salisbury. By her superior, although not classical attainments, she obtained the friendship of Dr. Stillingfleet, who declared that he knew not in England a more considerable woman than Mrs. Berkley. In his union with this amiable woman Bishop Burnet was eminently happy. Her influence in society tended, as that of every woman should, to make virtue throw its beams "far in a naughty world;" to elevate domestic, sober qualities in the eyes of men, by proving them to be compatible with the highest attainments; to be the counsellors as well as the solace of those whose vocation leads them to dive into the troubled waters of life.

The Bishop, who proved to all his wives an excellent husband, left to this, his last and his best, the disposal of her own fortune, and the entire charge of his numerous family. Mrs. Burnet, it is evident from many passages in the Duke of Marlborough's letters, was not only the intimate associate and correspondent of the Duchess, but the object of respect and esteem to all the great

leaders of the Whig ministry. She gained that ascendency, doubtless, in a great measure by her moderation—a quality which proves to the actors in difficult times as beneficial as the mariner's compass to a vessel at sea. It was a quality in which her eminent husband was peculiarly deficient, and the want of which obscured those great and good qualities, and that real regard for truth, for which his contemporaries did not give him justice, and which posterity has slowly and, as it were, reluctantly assigned to him.

Mrs. Burnet, unhappily for those whom she instructed by her example, or guided by her influence, was, at this time, no more. The winter of 1708 had witnessed her death, from a pleuritic fever attending the breaking up of the frost in January. With consistent attention to all her engagements, she was buried at Spetchley, by the side of her first husband, in compliance with a promise made to him. And on this delicate point she thought it proper to leave an explanation in her will, for the consolation of her second helpmate, Dr. Burnet.*

The afflicted and then aged prelate did not survive his wife more than six years; and the close of his eventful and laborious life was saddened by seeing those principles which he had con-

* Biographia Britannica, art. Gilbert Burnet.

sistently contemned, triumph, and produce renewed confusion and contention. Dr. Burnet was, however, unhappily for his party, but little qualified to advance its popularity by his courtesy, or to gain proselytes by any other measures than an earnest, sincere preference of certain principles. His conversation was singularly deficient in the arts of address; his sincerity was involuntary, and in certain situations provokingly obtrusive. His love of politics, in which he took perhaps too great a share for one engaged in concerns of far higher importance, was derived, according to his own account, from the conversation of his father, who had the same fondness for politics as the excellent prelate himself, and whose arguments and anecdotes engendered that taste in the mind of his son.* Hence sprang up that ardent, active, and unquiet character, adapted to do some good, but to incur much censure, in such times as those in which the Bishop lived. The character of Burnet, written by the Marquis of Halifax, and given by that nobleman himself to the Bishop, portrays with much delicacy of touch, and probably in not too severe a light, both the brilliant parts and the strong shadows of Burnet's mind: it brings to view the singleness of heart, the impetuosity of temper, the quick-

* Biographica Britannica.

ness to be offended, the readiness to forgive, the disinterestedness, the christian heroism, which were offensive to lesser men, from the high example which they presented, and which could not, without inconvenience to more selfish minds, be imitated.

Qualified thus to obtain respect, and having long exercised a considerable control over the Queen's spiritual concerns, Dr. Burnet now undertook, in the crisis of her affairs, to remonstrate with his obstinate, and as he considered, misled sovereign. Perhaps, if certain anecdotes be true, there could not be a person less qualified in manner, although admirably in intention, for so delicate a task. The Bishop had an awkward habit of remembering any circumstance disgraceful to an individual, and a still more awkward practice of letting those facts escape, in conversation, just at the moment when all the proprieties of life required that they should be concealed. When Prince Eugene, some time after this period, visited England, Dr. Burnet, anxious to see so remarkable a person, requested the Duke of Marlborough to accomplish a meeting between him and the Prince in society. The Duke consented, on condition that the Bishop would be careful to let nothing drop from him which might offend the feelings of his illustrious guest; and

Dr. Burnet was invited to dine, in company with the Prince, at Marlborough-house. It was not beyond the remembrance of most of the party assembled, and certainly still in that of the Bishop, that Prince Eugene's mother, the famous Countess of Soissons, had been imprisoned, about thirty years previously, with several other ladies of Paris, on suspicion of poisoning.* The Bishop had assuredly no intention of reminding Prince Eugene of this circumstance, and indeed, conscious of his infirmity, he resolved to sit incognito during dinner, and to listen, not to converse. Unluckily for the rest of the party, however, the brave Eugene, seeing a prelate at table, inquired

* The Countess de Soissons was one among many ladies of rank, and some belonging to the court, who, merely to satisfy curiosity, ever powerful in female hearts, visited a woman of the name of Voisin, who carried on a traffic in poisons, and was convicted by the *Chambre Ardente*, and burnt alive on the twenty-second of February, 1680. This woman kept a list of all who had been dupes to her impos_ ture; and in it were found the names of the Countess de Soissons, her sister the Duchess de Bouillon, and Marshal de Luxembourg. In order to avoid the disgrace of imprisonment without a fair trial, the Countess fled to Flanders; her sister was saved by the interest of her friends; and the Marshal, after some months' imprisonment in the Bastile, was declared innocent.—*See Beckman's History of Inventions*, vol. i. p. 94, 95.

of the Duke of Marlborough who it was, and being told it was Bishop Burnet, addressed himself to him, and inquired, by way of conversation, when he had last been in Paris. The Bishop answered with precipitation, "that he did not exactly remember the year, but it was at the time that the Countess of Soissons was imprisoned." As he spoke, his eye met that of the Duke of Marlborough, himself the quintessence of caution and courtesy; the poor Bishop was overpowered, and, by way of making the offence ten times greater, hastily asked pardon of his highness for his error.

The worthy Bishop's asking after "that wicked wretch, the Countess of Wigton," of her son, the Earl of Balcarres, and his avoiding Lord Mar because he did not like him, and knew that he could not avoid "babbling out something which would give him offence," proved his involuntary propensity of speaking his thoughts, and his consciousness of that inconvenient propensity.

Dr. Burnet now, during the winter of 1710, undertook to speak to the Queen on her affairs, more freely than he had ever in his life done before. He told her the reports that prevailed, of her intention to favour the design of bringing the Pretender to the succession of the crown, on condition of her holding it during her life. He

represented to her Majesty that her accordance in such a scheme would darken all the glory of her reign, and would arouse her people to a sense of their danger, and to the necessity of securing the Protestant succession; in which, the good Bishop assured her, he would plainly concur. He sought to work upon Anne's timid temper, by declaring to her, that if such were her plans, he believed that her brother would not wait until the term of her natural life for his possession, but take some means to shorten it; and that he doubted not, when the Pretender was on the sea, there were "assassinates" here, who, upon the news of his landing, would try to despatch her. To these emphatic arguments the Queen listened patiently, and for the most part in silence, and, with her usual timid and crooked policy, gave the Bishop to understand that she thought as he did. Yet his remarks produced no effect upon her mind; and no other consolation was left to the Bishop than that of having honestly and forcibly delivered his sentiments.*

The appointment of the Duke of Shrewsbury to the office of Lord Chamberlain, in room of the Marquis of Kent, who was made a peer, was the next event talked of, after the

* Burnet, Hist. p. 290.

last stormy interview between the Queen and the Duchess. Godolphin, who was at Newmarket when the staff was given to Shrewsbury, remonstrated in vain with the Queen; and although the most positive assurances of fidelity to the Whigs were given by Shrewsbury, it was impossible for the ministry not to entertain considerable suspicions of his sincerity.

The dismissal of the Earl of Sunderland from the post of secretary of state, in the month of June, was the first decisive blow struck against the power of the Marlborough family. It was aggravated by the refusal of the Queen to listen to the remonstrances of Marlborough, and the epistolary arguments of Godolphin.

"No consideration proper to myself," writes the Duchess, "could have induced me to trouble the Queen again, after our last conversation. But I was overcome by the consideration of Lord Marlborough, Lord Sunderland, and the public interest, and wrote in the best manner I could to the Queen, June seventh, 1710, begging, for Lord Marlborough's sake, that she would not give him such a blow, of which I dreaded the consequence; putting her in mind of her letter about the victory of Blenheim, and adding the most solemn assurances, that I had not so much as a wish to remove Mrs. Masham, and that all

the noise that there had been about an address for that purpose had been occasioned by Lord Marlborough's discontents at that time, which most people thought were just. To this the Queen wrote a very short and harsh answer, complaining that I had broken my promise of not saying anything of politics or of Mrs. Masham; and concluding that it was plain, from this ill usage, what she was to expect for the future."*

There is little doubt but that the Duchess's interference in this design, as she herself says, hastened its execution; certainly it did not retard it; for Lord Sunderland was dismissed from his office, greatly to the joy of the high church party, who extolled the Queen for her spirit in delivering herself from that arbitrary junto by whom she had been kept in an inglorious dependence. The Duke of Beaufort, one of this party, on appearing to pay his respects to her Majesty, complimented her "that he could now salute her as Queen indeed." But poor Anne, unfortunately, scarcely ever enjoyed more than the shadow of that authority which was disputed by factions, both equally intent upon personal aggrandisement.

Changes in the ministry were now of daily oc-

* Conduct, p. 254.

currence. Henry St. John, the eloquent advocate of Tory principles, was made secretary of state. The Duke of Marlborough, whose skill in discovering the depth of any man's capacity was acknowledged to be most profound, had already prognosticated that he would become an eminent statesman; but he wanted the firm foundation of integrity. Lord Chancellor Cowper resigned the seals, at first much to the discomposure of the Queen, who, with an unusual earnestness, begged him to keep them one day longer; but the next day, having consulted Harley and Masham, she received them readily, and gave them to Sir Simon Harcourt, an avowed adherent of the Pretender.*

Yet it was not until after other steps had been taken that affairs arrived at that point, according to the opinions of Godolphin and the Duchess, in which the game might be considered as utterly lost. For some months, indeed, the Whigs agreed to unite more firmly on these occasions, and determined that none of them should think of quitting, "but should rub on in that disagreeable way as long as they could." Eventually, however, the current against them proved to be too strong even for an unanimous cabinet to contend against.

* Cunningham, Burnet, Tindal.

The most ungracious act of Anne's reign was her dismissal of the disinterested, the faithful, loyal, and hard-working Godolphin. His disagreement with the Duke of Somerset, called, in derision, by his party, "the sovereign," tended doubtless to split the forces which the Whigs could ill spare. Somerset was a proud, interested, and equivocal politician, whose personal views made him vacillate from side to side.* From the correspondence between Mr. Maynwaring and the Duchess of Marlborough at this time, it is evident that the Whigs depended much on the Duke of Somerset's movements to decide the balance of power, notwithstanding the opinion entertained by the Duke of Marlborough "that he was an ill-judging man." It is also obvious that the utmost persuasions were adopted, both by Maynwaring and by Mr. Craggs, to induce the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough not prematurely, nor unnecessarily, to throw up their employments; and there were even many persons who recommended the Duchess to "live easy with Mrs. Masham," and who resented the Duchess's indignant refusals to truckle, as the Duke termed it, to her arch-enemy.

At last the final blow against the ministry was struck, by the dismissal of Lord Godolphin.

* Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 317.

The probability of this event had been asserted ever since the removal of Lord Sunderland, but had been positively denied by Anne,—who, through her former secretary, Mr. Boyle, had sent assurances to foreign courts that no more changes would be made in her ministry. "And yet," relates the Duchess,* "in less than two months after this, and even the very day after the Queen had expressed her desire to my Lord Godolphin himself that he would continue in her service, she dismissed him; and her letter of order to him to break his staff was sent by no worthier a messenger than a man in livery, to be left with his lordship's porter,—a proceeding which in all its parts would remain very unaccountable, if the Queen had not, to those who expostulated with her, made this undoubtedly true declaration, that she was sorry for it, but could not help it. Unhappy necessity!"

The Duchess could not view these changes without making one more struggle. It was probably at the united desire of the party that she wrote a long, an able, and a characteristic letter to the Queen, of which the precise date (for, like many ladies, she did not always date her letters) is unknown. It was written, however, before the dismissal of Lord Sunderland,

* Conduct, p. 260.

whilst yet the ministry remained entire, and whilst the "collection," (as the Duchess termed those statesmen who were talked of to succeed her friends) were in expectation only of the places and honours which they attained.

This celebrated and extraordinary epistle, penned with the freedom of an equal, was intended by the Duchess, as she declared, to express to the Queen freely those truths which no one else appeared to speak to her Majesty. It contained the strongest remonstrances, not only on the injustice done to the Duke of Marlborough by the new system of policy pursued, but on the injury which public affairs would receive, from the loss of credit and of confidence in the government. With respect to the proposed dissolution of parliament, the Duchess says—"When once the parliament is dissolved, and the credit of the nation lost, it will be in nobody's power to serve you, but the French will come upon you unawares. I heard a comparison of our credit, as it now stands, which I was pleased with. It was said to be like a green flourishing tree full of blossoms, which, upon the least change of ministry, would be nipped and blasted, as fruit is by a north-east wind. And I was told of a very unlikely man to understand the matter of parties, that is, Sir Godfrey Kneller, who, upon the news

of Lord Sunderland's being out, was going to sell all he had in the stocks, but a friend advised him to wait till it was done. If such a man as this thinks of doing so, it is easy to imagine that the alarm will work very far. And I cannot for my soul conceive what your Majesty would do all this for." *

These exhortations were of no avail; and perhaps added fresh inducements to the strong determination of the exasperated Queen; they certainly served to put the new favourites on their guard. But the Duchess wrote no letters to her Majesty without submitting them to the perusal of Godolphin,—the Duke of Marlborough being unfortunately abroad at this critical period.

The Duchess, in the meantime, resided chiefly at Windsor; the works were, nevertheless, still going on actively at Blenheim; and the Duke, in his letters of this period, earnestly entreats her to hasten the completion of the great court leading to the offices, and of the north side of the house, that he and the Duchess might have one side of the house "quiet;" "for, one way or other," adds the wearied and broken-spirited Marlborough, "I hope to be there next summer." †

Early in June, however, the Duchess, it ap-

* Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 343.

† Ibid. p. 351.

pears, was prevailed upon to come to London, not entirely with the Duke's approbation, for he was fearful that her coming to town, and not waiting upon the Queen, might have an awkward appearance. He commended her letter to the Queen, yet, in a subsequent despatch, begged her to write no more, since the behaviour of her Majesty did not warrant nor encourage other addresses.

The summer passed in anxious surmises on the part of the Duchess, whose sanguine spirit was sometimes buoyed with hope, though checked by the experienced Marlborough's more rational fears of utter ruin to their cause. At length, in the beginning of August, the dismissal of Godolphin destroyed every prospect of recovering the favour that had been so long actually withdrawn. Even Marlborough was not, it appears, prepared for this last blow, although sufficiently expecting mortifications.* The event was unexpected even by Godolphin, to whom the Queen had, only the day previously, as has been already tated, expressed her wish that he should continues in office.

Mr. Harley was made one of the first of the seven lords commissioners of the Treasury;

* Private Correspondence, p. 366.

† Conduct, p. 261.

and, in September, Lord Somers was dismissed, and the Earl of Rochester appointed president of the council in his place. Various other changes were made, which sufficiently proved to the country that henceforward a total change of measures would be adopted; and from this time the glory of Anne's reign may be said to have departed.

Whilst these occurrences were passing in London, Sacheverell was parading the country after the manner of a royal progress, and great violences were committed by the mob who followed him. Yet government took no notice whatsoever of these outrageous and scandalous proceedings, so derogatory to the cause of religion, which was made a pretext for these insults to her sacred name.

The Duchess, meantime, received the condolences and counsels of her two friends, Mr. Maynwaring and Dr. Hare, afterwards Bishop of Chichester. She also still assembled about her a little party of friends, and received without displeasure the compliments of a certain nobleman, Lord Lindsey, whom her friends called "her lover," and on whose devotion many jests were passed by her familiar associates. The joke was too freely used to infer any foundation for it, even in the most scandalous chronicles of that

scandalous day; yet was the Duchess still beautiful; still did she surpass the four most noted toasts of the times, her lovely daughters; still, and even to a late age, did she retain the freshness and vigour of youth—hair unchanged, complexion, spirits, activity, and a sparkling wit, to which the utmost candour gave an indescribable charm.*

* See Cibber's Apology. Lady M. Wortley Montague, preface.

CHAPTER X.

Anecdotes of Swift and Addison—Publication of the Examiner—Charge brought in the Examiner against the Duchess.

It augured ill for the Whig party when men of letters, who were not attached to any faction, took up their position, at this juncture, under the Tory banners. Amongst these, the most obnoxious was the Dean of St. Patrick's, whose intimacy with the leaders of both parties rendered the choice which he meant to take still a problem. In one of his letters, he declared, that the best intelligence he got of public affairs was from the ladies; Mr. Addison, his friend, being nine times more secret to him than to anybody else, because he had the happiness of being thought his friend.

Addison was right: for Swift's friendship, at this period more especially, conferred no credit

on any public man. Like that changeable reptile, the chameleon, he appeared of one colour in the morning, of another in the afternoon. Disappointed in the preceding year by Lord Halifax, who had written to him that he and Addison had entered into a confederacy never to "give over the pursuit, nor to cease reminding those who could serve him," till his worth was placed in that light in which it ought to shine, Swift was now seriously undertaking to devote his great powers to that cause which prospered best, retaining still the friendship of Addison, and enjoying a free admittance into the houses of Halifax and Somers.

It was in January, 1710, that the first invitation of Bolingbroke to Swift to dine with him, had foreboded no good to the party whose weakened fortresses such generals in literature were to attack. Swift's answer, with his wonted assumed independence and freedom, that "if the Queen gave his lordship a dukedom and the garter honours, and the Treasury just at the end of them, he would regard him no more than he would a groat,"—meant no more than that he intended to accept the invitation, and all the good things that might follow this token of favour.

It was in this year that a series of attacks on the former ministry was concerted between Bo-

lingbroke, Swift, Atterbury, and Prior, in defence of the Tory party. They were published weekly, but were of short continuance, under the name of the "Examiner." The essays contained nothing but political matter, very circumstantially and forcibly placed before the reader, and carried on with a subdued, but bitter irony, perhaps better calculated to influence the public mind than those bursts of indignant eloquence which startle the passions, and do not always convince the understanding.

Addison, writing to Swift at this period, declares, after expressing his wish again to eat a dish of beans and bacon in the best company in the world, (meaning his friend,) that he is forced to give himself airs of a punctual correspondence with Swift at St. James's coffee-house, to those friends of Swift who have a mind to pay their court to the then Irish secretary :* yet Swift at that very time had satirised Lord Wharton, Addison's patron, in terms so outrageous as to meet with the reprobation of the learned and moderate Dr. King, Archbishop of Dublin.

Such a paper as the "Examiner" had been, in the opinion of Swift, long required, to enlighten the public mind, and to disabuse the ignorant of those errors into which they had fallen respecting

* Swift's Letters, xiii p. 47.

the late ministry; and, accordingly, one of its most elaborate papers is occupied in discussing the charge of ingratitude, made against the Queen and her advisers, for dismissing the Duke of Marlborough from his employments.

After a long enumeration of the benefits which had been conferred on the Duke, and stating, in a manner unparalleled for ingenuity and eloquence, the unexampled rewards and privileges he had received, he follows the attack upon the Duke by another, still more insidious, on the Duchess.*

"A lady of my acquaintance appropriated twenty-six pounds a year out of her allowance for certain uses which the lady received, or was to pay to the lady or her order, as was called for. But after eight years, it appeared upon the strictest calculation that the woman had paid but four pounds a year, and sunk two-and-twenty pounds for her own pocket; 'tis but supposing twenty-six pounds instead of twenty-six thousand, and by that you may judge what the pretensions of modern merit are, where it happens to be its own paymaster."

From this hateful insinuation the Duchess amply cleared herself, in her Justification. Doubtless Swift was indebted to the female politicians who gave him such good information, for the dark

* Examiner, No. xvii.

hints which he threw out in so ungallant, so dastardly a manner, couched in terms to which it would be difficult to reply. Years afterwards, when most of the actors of those days except herself were in the grave, resting alike from political turmoils, and from the disturbances of their own passions, the Duchess met the accusations brought against her, and justified her character.* Her arguments, succinctly detailed in her Vindication, include the following observations.

At the time of her first disagreements with the Queen, she endeavoured, as she asserts, through a friend, to remove those impressions against her which Anne had imbibed. She wrote long accounts of the malice of her enemies, and stated her own grounds of justification. On one point only did the Queen vouchsafe an observation. "When," says the Duchess, "I had set forth the faithfulness and frugality with which I had served her in my offices, and had complained of the attempts made by the agents of her new friends to vilify me all over the nation, as one who had cheated my mistress of vast sums of money, her Majesty, on this occasion, was pleased to say, '*Everybody knows* cheating is not the Duchess of Marlborough's crime.'"

After seven-and-twenty years' service, the Queen, when the question as to her offences was

* Conduct, p. 263.

urged by the Duchess, alleged none but that of inveteracy against "poor Masham;" "yet," says the Duchess, "the ready invention of others, who knew nothing of my conduct, but whose interest it was to decry me, could presently find in it abundant matter of accusation."*

These gross calumnies, eagerly devoured by the credulity of party rage, determined the object of such unwarrantable censures, to write and publish something in her own justification, and produced a memorial, which for various reasons did not at that time see the light, but which the Duchess eventually wove into the form of that animated narrative, her "Conduct."

Her performance of her trust as mistress of the robes was attacked in libels, and charges of exorbitance and of peculation assailed her on all sides.

Her explanation of the circumstances under which she exercised her office, completely exonerates her from these grave accusations. But, through her clear and business-like vindication, few readers of our day will care to follow her. Interspersed with inuendoes against Harley, who "hired his creatures to misrepresent her as no better than a pickpocket," and interwoven with letters, and with compared accounts, between the expenses of Queen Mary and those of Queen Anne, the Duchess's defence, on these heads, will readily

* Conduct, p. 273.

be taken for granted. It appears that in 1712 she drew up a statement, which, for certain reasons, was not published. Horace Walpole, looking at the close only of her Vindication, as critics are wont to do, might well call it the "Chronicle of a Wardrobe, rather than of a reign." Yet against such enemies as the Duchess encountered, it was essential to preserve, and to insist upon, those accounts of mourning and other expenses, of new clothes and old clothes, sums given for the decorous attire of the maids of honour after the Prince of Denmark's death, coronation accounts, and other matters, which the calumniated Duchess was obliged to produce, to justify her integrity.

The following passage is curious, as showing the accurate and close manner in which the Duchess dealt, and the strict manner in which she insisted upon all points of expense being referred to herself.*

It was the custom, according to her account, for the tradesmen who were employed by the royal family, to pay immense sums to the masters of the robes for that privilege, and to reimburse themselves by putting extravagant prices upon their goods. This dishonest practice, disgraceful to the royal household, was first broken through by the Duchess, who exacted no such perquisites

* Conduct, p. 279.

from the tradesmen; neither would she suffer them to charge exorbitantly, as had been their custom. In discharging their accounts she was equally exact. Every bill was paid when the goods were delivered. A certain Mrs. Thomas, a confidential agent of the Duchess, was the person to whom the office of payment was given; and she was remunerated "by old clothes and other little advantages," to the amount of between two and three hundred a year; but never allowed to take money from tradespeople.

The Duchess next expatiates upon her management of the privy purse, the yearly allowance for which was twenty thousand pounds,* "not," as she declares, "half the sum allowed in King William's time, and indeed very little, considering how great a charge there was fixed upon it by custom—the Queen's bounties, play money, healing money,† besides the many pensions paid out of it. The allowance was augmented to twenty-six thousand pounds before I left the office. But in those two years Mrs. Masham was become the great dispenser of the Queen's money, I only bringing to her Majesty the sums that were called for."

But the responsibility of these places, which was so ungraciously requited by the public,

* Conduct, p. 282.

† Alluding, probably, to the custom of touching for the King's evil.

was soon finally closed. On the return of the Duke of Marlborough from the Hague, in December, he perceived that all confidence in the Whig ministry was at an end: the Queen herself telling him that he was not, as usual, to receive the thanks of the two Houses of Parliament, but that she expected he would live well with her ministers. At first the Duke, still anxious to carry on the war, resolved to be patient, and to retain his command; but finding that the Duchess had again, by express command of the Queen, been forbidden to come to court, he resolved, perhaps too late for his own dignity and that of his wife, to carry to her Majesty the surrender of all her employments. It was readily accepted. The Duchess of Somerset was made groom of the stole, and had charge of the robes; and Mrs. Masham was appointed keeper of the privy purse.

The Duchess may now be considered to have retired for a season wholly from political life; and, indeed, the bright but harassing course which she had passed was never resumed.

It would be curious to inquire into the actual nature of her feelings upon this occasion. Her employments were, as we have seen, reluctantly, and not without urgent reason, resigned. The love of money has been assigned as a cause of this tardy compliance with the evident, though

not expressed, wishes of the Queen. But whilst it is impossible wholly to defend both the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough from this charge, much may also be accorded to the hope, which the Duchess retained to the last, of regaining the affections of her alienated sovereign. Reproached by the Whigs as the cause of their dismissal, prompted by Godolphin, and perceiving that the fame of her husband, or at least the final accomplishment of his too extensive projects, depended on the party being kept together, there is every reason to excuse, on other grounds, the late surrender of what she had so long maintained. The promise that her employments should be bestowed on her daughters, was now wholly neglected; for the Queen's partiality had become little less than personal hatred, and it was not long before the affections of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough were assailed in their tenderest point.

From Somers, who blamed her as the cause of the misfortunes of his party, the Duchess received but little condolence on the loss of all her honours.* In Sunderland, whom she lately censured, in language the most vituperative, as the imprudent source of much mischief to the Duke her husband, she now beheld a warm and fearless advocate of the Duke, and of her own cause. Godolphin, himself deserted by those of his party

* Cunningham, b. xix. p. 348.

who had not courage to let their fortunes sink with his, was still faithful and kind, and if he reproved, condemned her not.

Godolphin was now, by the new parliament, accused of having occasioned the national debt, and of misapplying the public money. He defended himself with the eloquence of truth. At last, driven from every charge, the adverse party, headed by the Earl of Rochester, accused him of embezzling twelve thousand pounds paid by the Duke of Queensbury into the exchequer. Godolphin, wishing to expose the malignant temper of his adversaries, made excuses, as one who had forgotten, but who would call to mind what he had done with the sum. Many of the members inveighed against him with bitterness at this excuse. "The old man," says Cunningham, "made a show of falling into a fit of the epilepsy, and of being quite dejected: at last, when he had sufficiently tried and discovered the temper of the House, and how they stood affected towards him, behold her Majesty's warrant and sign manual, which he produced for the twelve thousand pounds in question." On the sight of this his adversaries were silenced.

In the ensuing year, 1711, the Duke of Marlborough was dismissed from all his employments; and with this event the Duchess's account of her conduct closes. The influence of the French,

the existence of strong prepossession in favour of the Pretender among most of the ministers, with the exception of Harley, and the necessity of sacrificing to the desire of a peace the general who had always opposed that measure, were the inducements, in the opinion of the Duchess, to this act on the part of the Queen. It was executed with as little feeling as could well be imagined. Historians have compared this act of ingratitude to the conduct of Justinian to Belisarius. The dismissal was written by the Queen herself, and in reply she received from Marlborough a calm, respectful, dignified, but fruitless remonstrance.*

At the close of her "Vindication," the Duchess makes the following observation to the nobleman to whom that work was addressed.† "Thus, my lord, I have given you a short history of my favour with my royal mistress, from its earliest rise to its irrecoverable fall. You have seen with admiration how sincere and how great an affection a Queen was capable of having for a servant who never flattered her. And I doubt not but your friendship made some conclusions to my advantage, when you observed for how many years I was able to hold my place in her regard, notwithstanding her most real and

* Conduct, p. 269. See Appendix.

† Ibid. p. 270.

invariable passion for that phantom which she called the church—that darling phantom which the Tories were for ever presenting to her imagination, and employing as a will in the wisp to bewilder her mind, and entice her (as she at last unhappily experienced) to the destruction of her quiet and glory. But I believe you have thought that the most extraordinary thing in the whole fortune of my favour, was its being at last destroyed by a cause, in appearance so unequal to the effect,—I mean Mrs. Abigail Hill. For I will venture to affirm, that whatever may have been laid to my charge of ill behaviour to my mistress, in the latter years of my service, is all reducible to this one crime—my inveteracy to Mrs. Masham. I have, indeed, said that my constant combating the Queen's inclination to the Tories, did in the end prove the ruin of my credit with her; and this is true, inasmuch as without that her Majesty could never have been engaged to any insinuations against me."

The Duchess of Marlborough was now at liberty to follow the bent of her own inclinations, and to fix her residence where she pleased. She gave up her apartments in St. James's Palace, immediately after the surrender of her offices of state, but she retained that of Ranger of the great and little parks of Windsor, one of the

grants from her sovereign that she valued most. The Lodge of the great park was, as the Duchess remarks, a very agreeable residence, and Anne had remembered, in the days of their friendship, that the Duchess, in riding by it, had often wished for such a place. The little Lodge, which was only a fit abode for the under-keepers, was given by the Duchess to one of her brothers-in-law, who laid out some five or six thousand pounds upon it; whilst her grace spent a scarcely less sum on the great lodge. The office, by virtue of which the Duchess claimed this residence, was afterwards the source of endless contentions, and of epistolary controversies, which, if they served no other purpose, exhibited the powers of mind which the Duchess possessed, in the clearest manner.*

For some time after her retirement from court, the Duchess, however, lived at Holywell House, St. Albans: she maintained as much magnificence as any subject ever displayed, both when she resided in the country, and also when she made Marlborough House, in London, her abode.†

That the Duke's popularity was still considerable among the lower classes, was apparent from the reception which he met with upon his last

* Coxe, MS. vol. xliii. † Lediard, p. 283.

return from Holland, on which occasion a crowd met and attended him from the city, and he had some difficulty in avoiding the acclamations which were uttered.* Yet it was at this time that he was greeted by that scurrilous pamphlet entitled, "Reasons why a certain general had not the thanks of either of the two Houses of Parliament, &c."

We may now presume, the storm being over, although its fury had not been weathered, that since their political career was for a time closed, the Duke and Duchess might return to private life, contented to pass together the remaining portion of their married life. The frequent separations, which war had rendered necessary, had been a perpetual source of regret to the good Duke, whose heart was framed for domestic life. In all his letters, he expresses that longing for home, that desire for an uninterrupted union with one whom he idolized, which hitherto had been precluded, both by the great general's arduous duties, and by the necessary attendance at court, imposed on the Duchess by her offices, even during the short intervals when Marlborough was permitted to relax from his toils.

That yearning for the fulfilment of his dearest hopes—hopes cruelly deferred—was, at length,

* Lediard, p. 278.

gratified. Marlborough, the slave of his country, the instrument and the controller at once of states and allied armies,—Marlborough, at length, was free,—at length he was permitted, even constrained, to return to the ordeal of private life; for to all men who have played a conspicuous part on the great theatre of the busy world, a domestic sphere must prove an ordeal which few, so situated, sustain with credit.

Since the first years of their early marriage, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough had scarcely passed a year of uninterrupted conjugal enjoyment. The youth and beauty of the Duchess had been the ornament of the court, in the absence of her husband, and had been the source of his pride, augmenting his anxiety to return home to one who was pre-eminently formed to fascinate the imagination. They were now reunited; but the Duchess was no longer the youthful beauty whose very errors charmed, and whose slightest word of kindness enraptured the doating heart of her fond husband. She was a disappointed woman: morose, captious, and, though not penurious, yet to an excess fond of wealth. The cares of a numerous family had proved temptations, not incentives to virtue and exertion. Her children loved her not; and her later days were passed in family differences, which wring the

tender heart, and bow down the feeble spirit; but which aroused all the ardour of a fiery and unrelenting temper, such as that which the once lovely Duchess, now "old Sarah," displayed.*

She was one of those persons whom misfortunes chasten not. It is related of her, that even during the Duke's last illness, the Duchess, incensed against Dr. Mead, for some advice which she did not approve, *swore* at him bitterly, and following him down stairs, wanted to pull off his periwig.* Dr. Hoadley, Bishop of Winchester, was present at this scene.

The violence of her temper is incontestibly proved; her affection for the Duke has been doubted. But, however she may have tried the deep-felt, and, even to the last, ardent attachment of the incomparable Marlborough, there is every reason to conclude that she honoured, she even loved, the husband whom she often grieved in the waywardness of her high spirit. No man can retain a sincere, a strong attachment for a wife who loves him not. Conjugal affection, to endure, must be reciprocal. There must be a fund of confidence, that, in spite of temper, in defiance of seeming caprice, assures a real kindness be-

* See Coxe—Lediard—Biog. Brit.

† Warton's Essay on Pope, p. 119.

neath those briery properties. Marlborough knew that he was beloved.

To the domestic hearth he brought, on the other hand, qualities such as few men engaged in public life could retain; such as few men in those days, in any sphere, could boast. Since his marriage, a holy and high-minded fidelity to the object of his only pure love, to his wife, had marked invariably his deportment. He brought home, therefore, a mind undebased, virtuous habits, conscious rectitude; and confidence in his wife, and self-respect, were ensured.*

In his love for his children, as a son, as a brother, as a master, Marlborough was equally amiable. "He was, in his private life, remarkable for an easiness of behaviour, which gave an inimitable propriety to every thing he did and said; a calmness of temper no accident could move;† a temperance in all things which neither a court life nor court favours could corrupt; a great tenderness for his family, a most sincere attachment to his friends, and a strong sense of religion, with-

* See Archdeacon Coxe.

† The Duchess herself remarks it, as an extraordinary occurrence, that her husband should, even upon a most trying occasion, be betrayed into anger. When he received from Queen Anne the letter containing his dismissal, he flung it, she says, "in a passion," into the fire. Coxe, MS. vol. xliii.

out any tincture of bigotry."* Such is the epitome of his private character. He was, also, endowed with that rare quality in man, patience; his campaigns, and all their attendant hardships, had taught him not to expect, like most of his sex and class, that every event in domestic life should contribute to his individual comfort. An anecdote told by Mr. Richardson, the painter, exemplifies this rare and super-excellent quality.

Riding one day with Mr. Commissary Marriot, the Duke was overtaken by a shower of rain. The Commissary called for and obtained his cloak from his servant, who was on horseback behind him. The Duke also asked for his cloak; his servant not bringing it, the Duke called for it again, when the man, who was puzzling about the straps, answered him in a surly tone, "You must stay, if it rains cats and dogs, till I get at it." The Duke only turned to Marriot, saying, "I would not be of that fellow's temper for the world."

The Duke possessed another attribute, peculiarly essential to the tranquillity of private life;—freedom from suspicion. It was his superiority to little jealousies which rendered him the rival, without being the enemy, of those great men with

* Biog. Britannica.

whom he was associated;—the friend as well as coadjutor of Eugene, the beloved of generals and potentates, as well as of soldiers. The same quality pervaded his calm mind in his domestic sphere. With the strongest affections, he was the husband of a beautiful and gifted woman, yet, devoid of misgivings respecting the lofty and sincere character of her whom, being constrained to leave, he quitted without a fear, to encounter all the adulation of courts: a perfect reliance on her prudence, her conduct, on all but the control of her temper, marks his letters to the Duchess.

The same feature of mind is conspicuous in the friendships of Marlborough. Though the scandalous world imputed to the intimacy of his wife with his dearest friend, Godolphin, motives which it is easy to attach to any friendship between persons of different sex, the confidence which Marlborough reposed in that friend, in absence, under circumstances the most trying, was never shaken. He knew the principles of action which actuated his wife; principles far more adequate to keep a woman pure, and a man faithful, even than the strongest attachment. Integrity of purpose is the only immutable bond.

For his generous and happy confidence, Marlborough was well repaid. His friendship for Godolphin, the only stay of his public career,

and his affection for his wife, ended only with existence.

We must recur to the question, what were the feelings, the pursuits, the enjoyments of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough in private life? In order adequately to discuss this subject, it is necessary to draw a sketch of the state of the country, and of parties, after the retirement of the Duke and Duchess; and to show how, unhappily, the leisure of these, their latter days, was disturbed by cabals, and by schemes of ambition with which they would have done wisely to have dispensed; and which darkened those years which might otherwise have been devoted to objects of higher and more enduring interest.

Dr. King, Archbishop of Dublin, writing to Swift, in alluding to the various factions which had prevailed in England, remarks, "I believe I have seen forty changes; nor would I advise my friend to sell himself to any (government) so as to be their slave."*

This advice was not very likely to be acceptable to the individual, nor to the age in which the good prelate wrote. Swift, as it is apparent in those letters which he addressed to the unhappy and infatuated Stella—letters sufficiently disgusting to have cured any woman of an ill-

* Swift's Works, vol. xiii. p. 36.

placed attachment—betrays with an unblushing coarseness, characteristic of the times, his readiness to prostitute his talents to which party soever would be the least likely, as they had found him "Jonathan," "to leave him Jonathan."*

The Whig party in literature, boasted, in 1710, when faction was at its height, the names of Addison, Steele, Burnet, Congreve, Rowe, and others. The Tory side, those of Bolingbroke, Atterbury, Swift, and Prior. But when Swift, after a vigilant study of the political atmosphere, declared himself ready to take the whole burden of periodical warfare on his shoulders, Addison meekly retired from the contest, leaving his friends to be assaulted and laid low by this irresistible champion.

A series of attacks upon all the members of government was now carried on with vigour for some years; but Swift, the intimate associate of the Masham family, directed his inuendoes, and the force of his irony, chiefly against the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, both in prose and verse. Those well-known stanzas, beginning

"A widow kept a favourite cat,
At first a gentle creature;
But when he was grown sleek and fat,
With many a mouse and many a rat,
He soon disclosed his nature,"

* See Swift's Letter.

are attributed alike to the Dean and to Prior. The virulent observations on eminent persons, in Swift's "Four Last Years of the Reign of Anne," excited even the indignation of Bolingbroke.

These attacks extended, of course, to the Duchess; but after her complete retirement from a public career, and when the total cessation of all intercourse between her and Queen Anne annihilated the former favourites, such animadversions on her, in particular, became of rare occurrence.

The retirement of St. Albans was, indeed, more than once invaded by the scurrilous sneers of those who, perhaps, envied the calm but not neglected retreat of the injured Marlborough. Contented, as he was wont to say, with his share of life and fame, he had, at this time, doubtless made up his mind to bid adieu for ever to politics; but his adversaries gave even to his amusements some peculiar meaning; and various comments in the newspapers of the day were intended at once to point out the party of friends with whom he held frequent commune, and to introduce a reflection side-ways, on the imputed narrowness of the Duke's conduct.*

The visit of Prince Eugene, in 1712, broke

* Lediard, vol. ii. p. 399.

upon this privacy. Eugene became acquainted with the dismissal of Marlborough, when on his passage, at the Nore, receiving at the same time a caution from Mr. Drummond, a spy of Bolingbroke's, who was despatched by government to receive him, "that the less he saw of the Duke of Marlborough the better,"—a caution which the fine spirited Prince sedulously and openly disregarded. The well-known and happy allusion which he made to Marlborough's disgrace showed the good-breeding and amiable feeling which subsisted between these mighty men, and was conceived in better taste than most compliments. When Harley, entertaining Eugene, declared that he looked upon that day as the happiest of his life, since he had the honour to see the greatest general of the age in his house, Eugene wittily replied, "that if it were so, he was obliged to his lordship for it;"—alluding to Harley's dismissal of Marlborough from his command of the army.

Stung by his country's ingratitude, and threatened even with a prosecution, which for the credit of England was stopped, Marlborough was driven on one occasion, and one occasion only, to abandon his usually cool and dignified forbearance. When the Earl of Poulett, in a debate in the House of Lords, referred to him, under the

description of a "certain general, who led his troops to the slaughter to cause a great number of officers to be knocked on the head, in a battle, or against stone walls, in order that he might dispose of their commissions," the patience of the Duke could endure no longer. He challenged the Earl, and a duel was only prevented by the interposition of the Secretary of State, and by the express command of the Queen.*

The death of Lord Godolphin, an event which took place under the Duke's own roof, at St. Alban's, on the 15th of September, 1712, determined Marlborough to quit England, and to reside abroad until better times should return. The Duchess fully concurred in this scheme; which became the more and more necessary to their mutual peace, since not even could she and the Duke enjoy and return the ordinary courtesies of society, without incurring observation and provoking suspicion. Marlborough was furnished with a passport, it is said, by the instrumentality of his early favourite, and secret friend, Bolingbroke; and in October the Duke sailed from Dover for Ostend.

His request to see the Queen, and to take leave, was refused, and they never met again. But her Majesty is declared to have expressed her hopes

* Lediard, p. 391.

that the Duke would be well received in foreign parts, and some say that Lord Treasurer Harley, not Bolingbroke, granted the passport, in opposition to the general opinion of the ministry, who dreaded Marlborough's influence at the court of Hanover.

In February, 1713, the Duchess, having remained to settle her husband's and her own affairs, followed his grace, and joined him at Maestricht, whence they went to Aix-la-Chapelle. It was during her residence abroad that the Duchess employed her leisure hours in writing that portion of her vindication, which she addressed to Mr. Hutchinson.*

Thus was the Duke of Marlborough, then sixty-two years of age, and the Duchess in her fifty-second year, driven from their country by the machinations of a party too strong for them to resist without the especial favour of the Queen. Anne is said coolly to have remarked to the Duchess of Hamilton, "The Duke of Marlborough has done wisely to go abroad." † But no expressions of regret are recorded of her Majesty's, upon the occasion of two old and long esteemed friends having thus quitted her dominions.

Notwithstanding that the passport permitted

* See Appendix. † Lord Cowper's Diary.

the Duke, with a limited suite, to go into foreign parts, wherever he might think fit, and recommended him to the good offices of all "kings, princes, and republics," he had some reason to apprehend a plot for seizing his person, at Aix-la-Chapelle, where he lived incognito.*

As if misfortune had set its mark upon him, the death of Godolphin was followed by that of his faithful friend, and the affectionate correspondent of the Duchess, Arthur Maynwaring, whose death was caused by a cold caught in walking late in the gardens of St. Albans, with the Duchess.

The sentiments of the Duke upon the subject of his wife's consent to quit, for the first time, when no longer in the prime of life, her native country—a sacrifice in those unsettled days,—are expressed in a letter written before the Duchess joined him at Aix-la-Chapelle, with a warmth of gratitude truly touching.

At Frankfort the Duke and Duchess resided for some time, and there they heard, in security, but in dismay, of events which affected the interests of the country they had left behind. The peace of Maestritcht, the details of which "our enemies will tell with pleasure," as Bishop Fleetwood observed, was a source of the deepest mortification to Marlborough, who thus beheld the

* Ibid. vol. iv. p. 229.

labours of his life, the blood of thousands, and the resources of his country, utterly thrown away.

The secession of England from the grand alliance, and the renewed intercourse between her court and that of France, first clandestinely, and afterwards openly, must have added sharp stings to the private vexations of Marlborough.

Yet the people of England, indignant at the suspected project of altering the succession, marked their sense of the attempt by heaping insults upon the Duc d'Aumont, the French ambassador. They assembled for days before the gates of Ormond-house, where he resided; they uttered acclamations whenever they saw him of "No Papist! no Pretender!" and put up a bunch of grapes at his door, in derision of his alleged sale of French wines and other goods, free of duty, for his own and his master's profit.*

The return of several noted Jacobites who had been outlawed, their insolence in the elections, and the publication of popular tracts in favour of the Pretender's title, all contributed to this party clamour.

In the midst of these discontents, the increasing maladies of the Queen were the subject of universal alarm, both to Whigs and Tories,—the former dreading lest her death should again

* Somerville, chap. xxiii. p. 125.

engage the country in a civil war; the latter trembling for that power of which her life was the sole stay.

The latter days of the once apathetic Anne were overshadowed by the gloom of mental uneasiness, and of corporeal suffering. Her frame was racked by the gout, her mind by the contending counsels of interested advisers, and by the dread of being governed by those to whom she gave the fair-sounding name of friends. She was harassed with repeated applications to strengthen the Act of Settlement by naming her successor. Her former professions of zeal for the Protestant religion, and the heartfelt conviction that her brother ought, by right of inheritance, to succeed her, created a struggle in her weak but conscientious mind. "Every new application to the Queen concerning her successor was," says an eminent historian, "a knell to her heart, confirming, by the voice of a nation, those fearful apprehensions which arose from a sense of her increasing infirmities;" whilst the motion of the Earl of Wharton, that a premium should be offered for apprehending the Pretender, whether *dead* or *alive*, excited an indignation in the unhappy Queen, which caused, in her reply, a departure from that official dignity to which she was so much attached.*

* Somerville, p. 554, 555.

The Duchess of Somerset had first succeeded the Duchess of Marlborough in the Queen's regard and confidence. This lady appears to have been much more worthy of the trust, either than her predecessor, or the intriguing Lady Masham, who succeeded her. A Whig at heart, the Duchess of Somerset acted, secretly, as a counterpoise to the too violent tendencies of the ministry from which her husband was dismissed. She probably tended to preserve Anne from an avowed predilection, that secret desire, which lay at the Queen's heart—the succession of her brother; and she had the great merit of preventing Swift from being made a bishop.* But even the Duchess exercised not that ascendency over the mind of Anne which had been attained by her earliest companion, the Duchess of Marlborough. The Queen, like many persons who have been disappointed in the objects of their regard, became suspicious, and extremely tenacious of her free-will. She even took pleasure in refusing those who were dearest to her, favours which they required, lest she should be suspected of again being governed. She became slow and cautious in conferring obligations; differing from her former practice, when she had been wont to thrust benefits upon the Duke and

* Sheridan's Swift, p. 143.

Duchess of Marlborough, and to command them to receive, "and make no more words about it." * The attention, and, as it was probably with justice called, obsequious service of the Duchess of Somerset, soothed the pride which had been irritated by previous neglect. Mrs. Masham often offended her Majesty by what the Queen called too much party spirit; but eventually her influence prevailed.

The consideration which the Duchess of Somerset acquired was of slower growth than that obtained by her artful rival. The Duchess of Marlborough, indeed, attributed to a desire of acquiring the Queen's favour, a little incident, of which she gives the following lively account, in her letter to Mr. Hutchinson. The narrative shows upon what a slender fabric royal approbation is founded.

"There was one thing more that happened about this time, in which the Duchess of Somerset was particularly concerned, and which was turned to a very malicious story against me. The case was this. At the christening of the child of Mr. Merydith's, in which the Duchess of Somerset was to stand godmother with me, I was pressed very much to give the name, which it was properly her place to do, and upon that

* Conduct.

account I refused it, till at last, to end the dispute, it was agreed by all that the child was to have the Queen's name. After this had been settled, I turned to the Duchess of Somerset, and said to her in a smiling way, that " the Duke of Hamilton had made a boy a girl, and christened it Anne, and why should not we make this girl a boy, and call it George?" This was then understood to be meant no otherwise than a jest upon the Duke of Hamilton, as it plainly was, and the Duchess of Somerset laughed at it, as the Queen herself, I dare say, would have done, if she had happened to be present. But this, as I had it afterwards from very good hands, was represented to the Queen in as different and false a way as possible, who was told that I said, ' Don't let the name of the child be Anne, for there was never one good of that name.' I leave you to judge who was the most likely to give this story this ridiculous turn; and who was to find their account in it.

" When some such stories as those had made a great noise in the world, and all my friends were much offended at the baseness of this way of proceeding against me, in order to make a greater breach betwixt the Queen and me, I remember particularly Mrs. Darcay, falling upon that subject, I suppose accidentally, would needs

persuade me to try and set all things right again with the Queen, by clearing up some of the false stories which had been made of me to her, of disrespectful things I was said to have spoke of her, several of which she repeated to me, and said she was sure the Queen had been told of them. These were some of them nothing else but what are properly called Grub-street stories; and therefore, as it was with some reluctancy that she had brought me to talk so much upon this subject, so I had still less inclination to engage in the defence of myself about these matters."*

The poor Queen was not long destined to enjoy her partialities in peace. When the preference which Harley had received from the Queen declined, or rather when he had offended Lady Masham, that mercenary favourite could then discover and disclose to others, that the "Dragon," as Harley was called in derision by her and her familiar associates, had been the most "ungrateful man" to the Queen, and "to his best friends, that ever was born," and had been "teasing and vexing the Queen without intermission for the last three weeks." † The same lady draws a mournful picture of the annoyances, importunities, and almost unkind usage, with which the

* Coxe MSS. vol. xliv. p. 2.

† Swift's Correspondence, vol. xv. p. 111.

poor Queen was assailed, by those whose party spirit she had fostered by her own vacillations.

The Tories beheld with dismay the undoubted decline of the Queen, and hailed each transient improvement in her health with undue elation. In the latter years of her life, political tergiversation became so common as scarcely to excite surprise. "Lord Nottingham," says Swift, "a famous Tory and speechmaker, is gone over to the Whig side; they toast him daily, and Lord Wharton says, it is Dismal (so they call him from his looks) will save England at last."*

"The least disorder that the Queen has," says Swift, writing, in 1714, to Lord Peterborough, "puts us all in alarm; and when it is over, we act as if she were immortal." † Harassed by political rivalships, each combatant, "the Dragon," and Mercurialis, (Bolingbroke,) being resolved, as it was said, to die hard, the Queen and the Duchess of Somerset were supposed to entertain the notion of there being no "Monsieur le Premier," but that all power should reside in the one, and profit in the other.

"Never," wrote Dr. Arbuthnot to Dean Swift, "was sleep more welcome to a weary traveller than death to the Queen. It was frequently her

* Swift's Correspondence, vol. xv. p. 73.

† Ibid. p. 76.

lot, whilst worn with bodily suffering, to be an agitated and helpless witness of the bitter altercations of the Lord Treasurer Harley and of her Secretary for Foreign Affairs. It was her office, good-naturedly to check the sneers of the former, and to soothe the indignant spirit of Bolingbroke. In their mutual altercations 'they addressed to each other such language as only cabinet ministers could use with impunity.'* Yet the Dragon held fast with a dead grip the little machine, or in other words, 'clung to the Treasurer's staff.'"†

To the disgrace both of Harley and Bolingbroke, if anything could disgrace politicians so venal, they each had recourse, in their extremity, to men of totally opposite principles to those which they had long professed. Harley addressed himself to Lord Cowper, and to the Duke of Shrewsbury, whose popularity with those who favoured the house of Hanover was greatly increased by his late conduct in Ireland. But neither of these influential personages would link themselves to the equivocal measures and falling fortunes of Harley.

Bolingbroke formed a scheme which proved equally unavailing, to rescue him from impending ruin. His superior influence with Lady

* Swift's Correspondence, vol. xv. p. 77.

† Swift's Letters.

Masham, and his correspondence with the Pretender, had secured him, as he believed, the favour of the Queen: yet he courted the Whig party, and resolved to avail himself again of that support which had been his earliest stay—the friendship and co-operation of the Duke of Marlborough.

The Duke had been expected, several times during the last year of Queen Anne's reign, to arrive in England. At one time it was said that St. James's, at another that Marlborough-house, was in preparation for his reception.

As affairs drew on towards the crisis, both Whigs and Tories solicited Marlborough to add his influence to their wasting strength. The Duke had been accused of having entered into an amicable and political correspondence with both parties; but from this charge he has been ably and effectually vindicated.* Throughout the political conflicts which had agitated the court of England since he had left her shores, Marlborough had maintained a steady correspondence with his friends, but had expressed a firm refusal to deviate from those principles which had occasioned his exile, or to approve of the peace of Utretcht, or to abandon his desire for the Hanoverian succession. Acting as a mediator between the Electoral Prince and the party well

* Coxe, p. 297.

affected to him in England, he distrusted the sincerity of Harley's pretended exertions, and resolutely decided that he would hold no intercourse with a minister of whose hollowness he had already received many proofs. Nor was the Duchess less determined never to pardon the injuries which she conceived herself and her husband to have received from Harley. All offers of his aid, all attempts to lend to him the influence which Marlborough's military and personal character still commanded, were absolutely rejected.

At the court of Hanover, the Duke and Duchess saw, as it were, reflected, the cabals of their native country.

The year 1714, marked by other signal events, witnessed the death of the Electress Sophia, at a moment when the Elector was hesitating whether to accept an invitation from the Hanoverian party in England, to repair to that country, and to take his seat in the House of Lords as Duke of Cambridge, the writ to which title he had recently received. The Electress died in May; her sudden decease having been hastened, it was supposed, by her anxiety that Prince George should make the important journey to which he had been solicited. The earnest hope of this accomplished and ambitious Princess

had been, to have "Sophia, Queen of England," engraved on her tomb; and she missed this object of her desires only by a space of two months.

The last hours of Queen Anne's weary existence were now drawing to an end. As she had begun her life in a political tempest, so was it to close. Sharp contentions between Lady Masham and Harley permitted little of peace, and no chance of recovery, to the easy and broken-spirited Queen. Lady Masham had now bid open defiance to Harley, nor could the mediation of the Duke of Shrewsbury, from whom much was expected, effect a truce of amity in the distracted cabinet.

What the intentions of the dying Queen actually were, with respect to a new ministry, cannot now be determined. It is not improbable but that, had she lived, Bolingbroke would have succeeded Harley. The dismissal of Harley took place on the twenty-seventh of July, three days only before the Queen's death. Her Majesty explained to the lords of the privy council her reasons for requiring him to resign the staff; namely, his want of truth, his want of punctuality, "the bad manners, indecency, and disrespect," with which he treated her.* A cabinet council was held on the evening of the twenty-

* Letter of Erasmus Lewes to Swift, vol. xv. p. 108.

seventh of July, to consult as to what persons were to be put into commission for the management of the Treasury. Five commissioners were named; but it is remarkable that several of those so specified declined taking office in times so perilous, and of a nature so precarious. The consultations upon this matter lasted until two o'clock in the morning, and were accompanied by contention so bitter and violent, that the Queen, retiring, declared to one of her attendants "she should not survive it." *

This conviction of her approaching end seemed to be prophetic. On Thursday, the twenty-ninth of July, the cabinet council were to have met again, but the Queen had then sunk into a state of stupor, which was relieved by cupping, an operation which she preferred to the common mode of bleeding. Her physician, Dr. Shadwell, declared that recent agitation had driven the gout to her head. Her case was now considered almost hopeless, and the council was deferred; yet her Majesty appearing to be relieved by the operation which she had undergone, hopes were again kindled. On the ensuing evening she rested well, rose with an impetus of vigour sometimes given to the departing spirit, and, after undergoing some duties of the toilet, looked earnestly

* Boyer, p. 714.

upon a clock which stood in the room. One of the bedchamber-women, observing that her gaze was fixed, asked her Majesty "what she saw in the clock more than usual?" The Queen answered her not, but turning her head towards her, the affrighted attendant saw death written on her countenance. She was again bled, and again she revived.

Meantime the privy council assembled at the Cockpit were apprized, through the Duchess of Ormond, of her Majesty's condition. The memorable scene which ensued has been often told. The ministers immediately adjourned to Kensington, and the physicians being consulted, and having declared that their sovereign was still sensible, she was recommended by the unanimous voice of the council to appoint the Duke of Shrewsbury Lord Treasurer. Anne, expiring, could summon strength to approve this choice, and to place the Treasurer's staff in the hands of the Duke, begging him to use it for the good of her people. After this effort she sank unmolested into her last slumber.

The heralds-at-arms, and a troop of the life guards, were in readiness to mount twenty-four hours before the Queen's death, to proclaim the Elector of Brunswick King of England; so great was the apprehension of the

Pretender. After this, even, and when despatches had been sent to the Elector of Brunswick, the Queen's pulse became stronger, she began to take nourishment, and many around her entertained hopes. "But this," says her historian, "was but the flash of a dying light." The Bishop of London in vain stood by, ready to administer the eucharist, which she never revived sufficiently to receive. She died without signing the draught of her will, in which bequests were made to her servants. By this informality, Lady Masham, Dr. Arbuthnot her physician, and others, were deprived of legacies.

Thus, though long expiring, Anne's last offices of religion were incomplete, her wishes unfulfilled.* Her subjects, expectant of her death, were, for the most part, frightened to the last lest she should recover. She had erred in rendering herself the head of a faction, rather than the impartial ruler of a free people. Yet such was her peculiar position on coming to the throne; so important a barrier did she constitute against the dreaded restoration of her brother and his line; so unoffending was her personal deportment, so sincere her love for the church, and, according to the extent of her capacity, so excellent were her intentions, that Anne reigned in

* Boyer. Arbuthnot's Letter to Swift, vol. xv.

the hearts of the people. Her faults as a governor were viewed with a forbearing and extenuating spirit. Her errors were attributed to her advisers. Her simplicity of character, her ignorance of the world, and her credulity, the consequence of these two negative qualities, were well understood. She was easily intimidated by the notion, diligently infused into her mind, that she should one day experience from the Whigs the same sort of conduct as had cost her grandfather, Charles the First, his crown and life.* Her capacity was slow in receiving, and equally slow in parting with impressions. She had a great diffidence in any person placed in an office of responsibility, an unfortunate one of her own judgment, which rendered her too yielding to the persuasions of those whom she called her friends. The bitter pen of the Duchess of Marlborough, which attributes to her character unbounded selfishness, must not be too readily credited. Her early surrender of her superior right to William, her attention and affection to her consort, her very faults as a monarch, prove her to have been remarkably devoid of that quality, when we consider her isolated position in society. That Anne was not blessed, nor cursed, as it may prove, with that sensitiveness which belongs to higher minds,

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 147.

and which can only by such be turned to the best of purposes, does not detract from her amiable and domestic qualities, but rather heightens the value of that principle which could render her an affectionate wife, patient and unwearied in the hours of sickness; a generous friend, whose partiality caused her to overstep the landmarks of etiquette, and to disregard the boundaries of rank; a beneficent patron of the poor clergy; an excellent, because a just, orderly, and economical mistress. It has been justly said, that her conduct to her father was the only stain upon her domestic virtues; and she appears to have atoned for it by a continual penitence. She died childless, attended on her deathbed only by interested dependents,* and followed to her grave by many

* Her early medical attendant, and that of her family, Dr. Ratcliffe, the singular benefactor of Oxford, was not present at her sick-bed. He died soon afterwards. This humorist, and shrewd physician, had offended her Majesty some time previously, by saying that her complaint was nothing but "*vapours.*" Possibly he was so far right, that repose, not medicine, was what the poor, harassed Queen required. Dr. Ratcliffe had been sent for to Prince George by the Queen's express desire. On that occasion he had given her Majesty no hopes; telling her that however common it might be for surgeons to use caustics in cases of burning and scalding, "it was irregular for physicians to expel watery humours by the same element." To this dogmatic assertion he added a pro-

who had earnestly desired her death. Her decease was followed by the return of early friends from whom she had been long separated, and who awaited that event before they could cease to be exiles.

mise that the dying Prince should have an easy passage out of this world, since he had been so "tampered with," he could not live more than six days.—*Ingram's Memorials of Oxford*, vol. iii. p. 8.

For some further notice of this extraordinary man, see the concluding portion of this volume.

CHAPTER XI.

Return of the Duke and Duchess—Their reception—The Duchess's advice to her husband—Political changes in which the Duke and Duchess were partly concerned.—1714.

On the day before the Queen's demise, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough arrived at Ostend from Antwerp, for the purpose of embarking for Dover. This step had been for some time in contemplation by the Duke, although the reasons which finally decided him to return to his country have never been exactly ascertained. He had refused, so late as the month of July, 1714, to sign the Whig association, presented for his approval by Lord Onslow, the deputy of that party.* He was addressed both by Bolingbroke and by Harley, but not claimed as an adherent by either of these politicians. So confident were both these ministers of his aid, that

* Somerville, Appendix II p. 656.

they ordered him to be received at the ports with the same honours as he had met with on returning after his victories; but these directions were countermanded, when it was understood that he would not participate in any of the politics of the day.*

The Duchess had already announced to her correspondents in England the project entertained by herself and the Duke, of again residing in their beloved England. On arriving at Ostend, she wrote to her friend, Mrs. Clayton, whose husband, a clerk in the treasury, was one of the managers of the Duke's estates during his absence.

"July 30, 1714.

"I am sure my dear friend will be glad to hear that we are come well to this place, where we wait for a fair wind; and in the mean time, are in a very clean house, and have everything good but water. It is not to be told in this letter the respect and affection shown to the Duke of Marlborough, in every place where he goes, which always makes me remember our governors in the manner that is natural to do; and upon this journey, one thing has happened that was surprising and very pretty. The Duke of Marl-

* Lediard, p. 447.

borough contrived it so as to avoid going into the great towns as well as he could, and for that reason went a little out of the way, not to go through Ghent; but the chief magistrates, hearing he was to pass, met him upon the road, and had prepared a very handsome breakfast for all that was with us, in a little village, where one of their ladies staid to do the honours; and there was in the company a considerable churchman that was lame, and had not been out of his room for a great while, but would give himself this trouble. This is to show you how the Roman Catholics love those that have served them well. Among the governors of that town there were a great many officers that came out with them on foot; and I was so much surprised and touched at their kindness, that I could not speak to the officers without a good deal of concern, saying I was sorry for what they did, fearing it might hurt them; to which they replied, very politically or ignorantly, I don't know which, sure it was not possible for them to suffer for having done their duty. The next day Mr. Sutton met us with other officers, and did a great many civilities, in bringing wine and very good fruits, but I was not so much surprised at that, because he is so well with the ministers he may do what he pleases. The Duke of Marl-

borough is determined to stay here till he has a very fair wind and good weather, and not to be at London till three or four days after he lands at Dover, because we have so many horses and servants, that we can't travel fast."*

After a few days of suspense as well as of delay at Ostend, the Duke and Duchess set sail, and, after a stormy passage, were met, and their vessel was boarded, by a message from Sir Thomas Frankland, the postmaster-general, who announced the Queen's death.† The Duke landed on the first of August, memorable for the accession of George the First, and was received by the Mayor and Jurats of the town with all formalities, and saluted by a discharge of great guns from the platform, but not from the castle, which pays such tribute to no one but the sovereign. Amid the acclamations of the assembled crowds, the Duke and Duchess proceeded to the house of Sir Henry Furnese, whose hospitable roof had received the great general, previous to his departure for his exile on the continent.

These rejoicings were much censured, as being indecent on the very day after the Queen's death; and it was affirmed in excuse, that even the worshipful authorities of Dover were not apprised of that event when they received the Duke with

* Coxe, vol. vi. p. 296. † Ibid. p. 305.

noisy honours.* But the Duchess, sincere in all things, left in her narrative an explicit statement that the Duke had been informed of Anne's decease whilst he was at sea.

Meantime, by an act of parliament passed in the fourth and fifth years of the late reign, a regency, consisting of the seven highest officers of the realm, came into immediate operation: and to these lords justices were added seventeen other noblemen, all heads of the Whig party, whom George the First was empowered, by the same act, to appoint. The Duke of Marlborough might reasonably have expected to find himself included among the persons thus honoured; but, on his progress to Sittingbourne, he was met by a former aide-de-camp, with the intelligence that neither his name nor that of Lord Sunderland was included in this catalogue.

Marlborough received this communication with the calmness that became a superior mind. His exclusion is said to have been the result of pique in the Elector, father of the King of England, on account of some want of confidence reposed in him by Marlborough, with respect to the operations of the campaign of 1708. It was attributed by others to the reported correspondence between Marlborough and the Stuart family. Be the

* Lediard, p. 453.

cause what it might, this ungracious conduct was received both by the Duke and Duchess with a becoming spirit. They continued their journey to the metropolis, intending to enter it privately; but their friends would not suffer that Marlborough should thus return to dwell among them again. A number of gentlemen had attended them to Sittingbourne, and by them, and by others who met him there, he was, in part, forced to permit the honourable reception which awaited him. Sir Charles Cox, the member for Southwark, met him as he approached the borough, and escorted him into the city. Here he was joined by two hundred gentlemen on horseback, and by many of his relations, some of them in coaches and six, who joined the procession, the city volunteers marching before. In this manner the Duke proceeded to St. James's, the people exclaiming as he passed along, "Long live King George—long live the Duke of Marlborough!"

At Temple Bar the Duke's coach broke down, but without any person sustaining injury, and he proceeded to his house in St. James's, in another carriage, the city guard firing a volley before they departed. The evening was passed in receiving friends and relations; with what sweet and bitter recollections, it is easy to conceive.

On the following day the Duke was visited by the foreign ministers, by many of the nobility and gentry then in the metropolis, and by numerous military men. He was sworn of the privy council, and once more appeared in the House of Lords, where he took the oaths of allegiance. But, on the prorogation of parliament to the twelfth, he retired to Holywell-house, there to conquer the vexation and disappointment which his exclusion from the regency undoubtedly occasioned him. On this occasion, the spirit of Lady Marlborough displayed itself, with a magnanimity and sound discretion which redeemed her many faults. Bothmar, the Hanoverian minister, visited the Duke in his retreat, and sought to apologise for the omission of his illustrious name from among the distinguished statesmen who were appointed lords justices. The Duke listened to these excuses with his usual courtesy, but he wisely adopted the advice of the Duchess, and declined at present again holding any official appointment.

"I begged of the Duke of Marlborough, upon my knees," relates the Duchess, "that he would never accept any employment. I said, everybody that liked the Revolution and the security

of the law, had a great esteem for him, that he had a greater fortune than he wanted, and that a man who had had such success, with such an estate, would be of more use to any court than they could be to him; that I would live civilly with them, if they were so to me, but would never put it into the power of any king to use me ill. He was entirely of this opinion, and determined to quit all, and serve them only when he could act honestly, and do his country service at the same time."*

Six weeks elapsed between the death of Queen Anne and the arrival of her successor. On the sixteenth of August, the King embarked at Orange-Holder, and landed two days afterwards at Greenwich. Every ship in the river saluted the royal vessel as it sailed, and multitudes thronged the banks of the Thames, uttering loud acclamations of joy at the arrival of the monarch. Yet George the First, a man of plain understanding, without ambition, the romance of monarchs, felt, it is said, that he had arrived to claim a crown not his own, and had an uncomfortable notion all his life, that he was somewhat of a character to which nature had little disposed him, an usurper. In the evening of his land-

* Coxe, p. 6. 308.

ing, the royal house at Greenwich was crowded with nobility and gentry, amongst whom the Duke of Marlborough (who was regarded as a kind of martyr to the "criminals" of the last reign, as it was now the fashion to term Queen Anne's last ministry) was pre-eminently distinguished by the new sovereign.*

The character of King George the First was well adapted to put an end to the furious factions by which the court had now for many years been disgraced, public business had been impeded, and peace long delayed, and obtained by the sacrifice of consistency. Of a plain exterior, simple habits, devoid of imagination, ignorant of English, and endowed with a vast proportion of German good nature and German indolence, the King had little of that propensity to favouritism which had filled the courts of his Stuart predecessors, and even of the just and stern William, with cabals. It may be said, that the reputation of George the First was far greater before he came to the throne of England, than after he ascended to that, in his time, uncomfortable eminence. He had distinguished himself in military operations, yet, when King of England, had the wisdom to forego a desire of fame which might have proved

* Macauley. Lediard.

ruinous to his adopted people. His career as a warrior began and ended early. He had governed his German subjects with regard to the principles of the English constitution. It was the work of a corrupt English ministry to lead him from these honest intentions and worthy practices. It has been wittily said by Lord Chesterfield, that "England was too large for him.*" He found the court thronged with Whigs, to whom he showed marks of decided preference; yet not, it was suspected, without a design of borrowing strength to his still disputed title, by conciliating some of the Tory party.

One of the King's first measures was to restore Marlborough to his post as captain-general of the land forces, to make him colonel of the first regiment of foot-guards, and master-general of the ordnance. The Earl of Sunderland was appointed Lord-lieutenant of Ireland; and a Whig cabinet was soon completely formed.

Dr. Arbuthnot, who, in his semi-medical, semi-political capacity, dived into the intricacies of court intrigues, remarks, that it were worth while living to seventy-three, from curiosity to see the changes in this strange medley of events, the world. It was but lately that the Duke of Marlborough had

* Macaulay. Chesterfield.

yielded to the solicitations of his Duchess, that he would accept of no employment whatsoever in the administration; he now broke through that wise resolution, tempted, it is supposed, by the appointment of his son-in-law to various offices in the royal household. Lord Godolphin had the post of cofferer to the household; and Lord Bridgwater was appointed chamberlain to the Prince of Wales. The Duke and Duchess of Montague had also preferments of importance.

But, with respect to Marlborough, these marks of royal favour availed but little: he never regained political influence. Sunderland, whose active spirit might have re-established the interests of his family, was, in fact, banished from the court by his appointment, and his great father-in-law ceased to be consulted in matters of state, and sank, finally, into a private station. The routine of his office, indeed, rendered his visits to the metropolis imperative; but it was unconnected with any political importance.

The invasion of England by the Pretender drew Marlborough somewhat from the state of neutrality with regard to public affairs, in which he reposed. Whatever might have been his previous conduct with regard to the exiled Stuarts, he now, with other eminent and loyal men, contributed a voluntary loan to the Treasury, to

meet the emergencies of the state, and, on his private credit alone, raised a considerable sum within the space of a few hours. With the foresight of long experience, he foretold the disastrous engagement at Preston, and even marked the distinct spot on which all the hopes of the gallant and ill-fated enemy were doomed to be foundered.*

The Duke and Duchess of Marlborough retired almost wholly to their house at Holywell, where, assembling at times their children and grandchildren around them, they tasted at length of that happiness for which one of this distinguished couple, at least, had continually pined, in absence. The peaceful retirement, which had so often been the theme of Marlborough's letters, came at last; but, like many long-desired blessings, it came hand in hand with care. It was not at this period that the broken health and weakened mind of Marlborough cast a gloom over that circle of young and old, of which he was the life and centre. For some years after the accession of George the First, Marlborough continued to be a healthy and an active man; riding on horseback or driving about, and delighting, when he was at Blenheim, in walking about the grounds, inspecting those beautiful

* Coxe, vol. iii. p. 610.

ornate scenes which his taste and wealth had caused to flourish around him. In the evening he received his friends without ceremony, and joined in the games of ombre, basset, and picquet, or of whist, his favourite game; and the illustrious and amiable Marlborough often descended to a pool of commerce with his grandchildren.

It was during this season of retirement that the Duchess began the compilation of "Memoirs of the Duke," a work which was not published. That she prized his fame far more than her own justification, is manifest from her commencing this undertaking when her faculties were in their full vigour, and her opportunities of consulting living testimony were still, in most cases, to be obtained; while she left the completion of her own Vindication until a late period of her existence.*

Amongst the more important and less peaceful occupations which engaged the attention of the Duke and Duchess, the building of Blenheim formed one of the circumstances most obnoxious to his tranquillity of mind.

The disputes, to which the management of this

* A portion of that task, namely, her letter to Mr. Hutchison, she is stated, in a note in Dr. Coxe's handwriting, to have begun during her residence abroad.

national gift gave rise, might occupy a volume; they must, however, remain to be discussed at a more advanced period of this work. But the erection of that superb habitation, which the Duke of Marlborough lived not to see completed, induced an acquaintance with one of the most versatile wits of the day, Sir John Vanburgh.

The character and conduct of this distinguished dramatist and indifferent sculptor had no inconsiderable effect upon the tranquillity of the Duchess of Marlborough, with whose confidence this experienced man of the world was honoured. A very singular, and to both the writers a very discreditable correspondence, between the Duchess and Vanburgh, is preserved among the manuscript stores of the British Museum. Since it elucidates some passages of the Duchess's domestic life, and unfolds some material points of character, a few extracts from this singular correspondence may not be uninteresting, more especially as the letters have never been introduced in any publication, either in their original form, or in substance. Before entering upon the occurrences to which it refers, a brief account of one of the parties is necessary.

Sir John Vanburgh was descended from a family originally from Ghent; his grandfather,

Gibes Vanburgh, or Vanburg, being obliged to fly from that city on account of the persecution of the Protestants. The father of Sir John Vanburgh became a sugar-baker in Chester, where he amassed a considerable fortune, and, removing to London, obtained the place of comptroller of the treasury chamber. His mother was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Dudley Carleton of Ember Court, Surrey.

The future dramatist and architect was one of eight sons, and was destined for the army. A love of desultory reading, and a youthful acquaintance with Congreve, led him, however, to the stage. So early as 1698, the youth, relinquishing a soldier's life, produced two comedies, the " Relapse" and the " Provoked Wife ;" both remarkable for the wit of their dialogue, and for the licentiousness of the sentiments.

For some years the fascinations of public applause riveted this capricious genius to the occupation of a dramatist. During the first years of Anne's reign, he accomplished the erection, by subscription, of the Haymarket Theatre, for the building of which he had interest enough to obtain a sum of three thousand pounds from thirty persons of rank, each of whom subscribed a hundred pounds. At this time the courtly Vanburgh

paid a public tribute to the Marlborough family, by inscribing on the first stone that was laid of the theatre, the words, "The Little Whig," in compliment to Lady Sunderland, popularly known by that designation. It was in this theatre that, in conjunction with Congreve, he managed the affairs of Betterton's company, and produced for their benefit comedies which would not now be tolerated for a single evening, on a stage, pure in its subjects as compared with that of the last century.

It is said by Cibber that Vanburgh eventually repented of the immoral tendency of his works, and that he would willingly have sought to retrieve his errors by more chastened publications. Those authors, who degrade themselves, and debase the minds of others, should remember, that it is impossible to counteract the baneful effects of that species of poison, which of all others is the most easily disseminated. The envenomed shaft of licentious wit never flies in vain, nor can its direful progress be recalled.

It is uncertain at what time Vanburgh became an architect; but he must very rapidly have attained eminence, since his first great work, "Castle Howard," was completed before Blenheim became habitable.

Handsome in countenance, witty, accomplished,

and not of lowly birth, Vanburgh soon won the favour of those with whom he was, from his occupations, brought into contact. His cheerfulness was never overclouded by any misfortune. Even during a temporary confinement in the Bastile, his spirits were unabated, and the great secret of his composure was employment.*

It appears extraordinary that so inferior a sculptor as Vanburgh should have been selected to build a palace raised at the expense of the nation. Although satirised by Swift, Walpole, and Pope, Sir John Vanburgh had, however, his admirers, and received high encomiums from Sir Joshua Reynolds, who declares, "that in his architectural works there is a greater display of imagination than in any other." "He had," says Sir Joshua, "great originality of invention; he understood light and shadow, and had great skill in composition." These, with other commendations, from the same great judge, might have rescued many characters from the reproaches of posterity; but Blenheim, massive without gran-

* The principal of Sir J. Vanburgh's works, besides Castle Howard and Blenheim, were Eastleving, in Dorsetshire; King's Weston, near Bristol; the Opera House, and St. John's Church, Westminster—not to mention his own residence at Whitehall, of which Swift writes—

"At length they in the rubbish spy
A thing resembling a goose-pie."

deur, and laboured in style, without unity of design, stands an everlasting reproach to its architect.

The intimacy of Vanburgh with all the leading characters of the day accounts for the confidence with which he was treated by the Duchess of Marlborough, on the nicest of all points—the disposal in marriage of those in whom she was deeply interested. The singular correspondence which we shall presently introduce to our readers, marks the intimacy which subsisted between the architect and the patron. Like many such unequal alliances, familiarity, in this instance, produced contempt.

The Duchess, indignant as she became at the impertinence and assurance of Vanburgh, never assisted him to any office; but, in 1704, Vanburgh was, by the interest of Charles Earl of Carlisle, promoted to the appointment of Clarencieux king-at-arms; a proceeding which was naturally resented by the whole college of heralds, who were indignant at having a stranger, and one without the slightest knowledge of heraldry or genealogy, made king-at-arms.*

Sir John was appointed controller of the royal works, and surveyor of the works at Greenwich

* Swift's pun on this occasion was, that he might now "build houses."

Hospital. He resided at Vanburgh Fields, Maize Hill, Greenwich,* where he built two seats, one of them called the Bastile, and built on the model of that prison, where, it is said, the whimsical architect had once been confined and treated with humanity.† Another house, built in the same style, at Blackheath, and called the Mincepie House, was lately inhabited by a descendant of its first proprietor.‡

Alluding to Blenheim, Swift observes—

> "That if his Grace were no more skilled in
> The art of battering walls than building,
> We might expect to see next year
> A mouse-trap-man chief engineer."

Such was the opinion entertained by a contemporary wit, of Vanburgh's architecture. In heraldic science he is said to have been less skilled than the least of the pursuivants. His comedies, renowned for the well-sustained ease and spirit of the dialogue, are, to those who deem the gratification of curiosity cheaply bought by an acquaintance with all that is accounted most licentious, curious as pictures of the manners of the times in which they were written.

* Hist. Vanburgh's House, 1708.

† This anecdote is pronounced by Mr. D'Israeli, in his "Curiosities of Literature" (1823), to be a mere invention.

‡ Vanburgh died in 1726.

We have seen how successfully the Duchess of Marlborough contrived to connect her family, by alliances of her daughters, with several of the most exalted families in the kingdom. Her energetic mind now devoted itself with equal zeal and perseverance to the proper settlement of her eldest grand-daughter, the Lady Harriot Godolphin, in whose matrimonial prospects she took a lively interest, notwithstanding that the Countess of Godolphin, the young lady's mother, was still alive. The Duchess fixed her hopes, as a son-in-law, on Thomas Pelham Holles, maternal nephew of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, whose title he obtained by creation. Pelham Holles, at the time when the Duchess's speculations were first directed towards him, was Earl of Clare, under which designation we find, in the correspondence between her grace and her confidential agent, that the future Duke was mentioned.

It was in the beginning of 1714 that a marriage treaty between the house of Marlborough and that of Newcastle was first contemplated by the Duchess.* It is needless to specify, what is well known, that in those times, and in the rank which the Duchess filled, marriage was seldom an affair in which those mainly interested were

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 76.

allowed to judge, or to reject. It was usually a contract between relations, acting, as they considered, most effectually for the happiness of two individuals whom they wished to see betrothed; the condition being that the parties were well assorted in station, the portion of the lady competent, and the fortune of the gentleman equivalent to what she or her friends had a right to expect. The negociation which is unfolded in the correspondence of the Duchess and Sir J. Vanburgh, is a perfect specimen of this species of contract, in which the parties had not even seen each other, until matters had advanced somewhat too far to be withdrawn.

Lord Clare, or, to call him by his subsequent title, the Duke of Newcastle, appears, however, to have had higher and juster views of the state of matrimony than most of the noblemen of his day, who regarded it as a mere tie of convenience, or means of aggrandisement, and who troubled themselves very little about the disposition or sentiments of the family into which, for sundry reasons, they entered. The character of Pelham Holles, Duke of Newcastle, seems, at the period of the correspondence of which he was the subject, to have been singularly discreet and amiable. He was not, indeed, a man of high qualities, nor of such extensive and solid attain-

ments as to justify the extraordinary success which afterwards, in attaining the highest posts in the government, he enjoyed. Devoted to politics, and to the party of Townshend and Walpole; a zealous promoter of the Protestant succession; he led a life of bustle, and was constantly in search of popularity; always in confusion, often promising what he could never grant, yet performing well the domestic duties of his station. Kind, though exact, as a master, and energetic in all his official duties, he might certainly be deemeed highly respectable.

Not foreseeing the great eminence to which he was destined to rise, the young nobleman, at this period of his life, earnestly desired to connect himself in marriage with some family suitable to his own in wealth and influence. His views might not have been directed to the Marlborough family, had not the Duchess, to whom Vanburgh was at that time a willing agent, imparted from her grace some hints that a matrimonial connexion between her grand-daughter and Lord Clare would not be unacceptable.* Vanburgh, like a true votary of the great, in those days of patronage, took his cue from the Duchess's expressions; and as the dramatist had many opportunities of sharing Lord Clare's

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 76.

leisure hours, the Duchess could not, in some respects, have employed any person more likely to promote her speculations.

Vanburgh thus described the commencement of those operations which were intended to unite the great houses of Churchill and Pelham Holles. Writing to the Duchess, he says—"I have brought into discourse the characters of several women, that I might have a natural occasion to bring in hers, (Lady Harriott's,) which I have then dwelt a little upon, and, in the best manner I could, distinguished her from the rest. This I have taken three or four occasions to do, without the least appearance of having any view in it, thinking the rightest thing I could do would be to possess him with a good impression of her, before I hinted at anything more." *

This skilful generalship for some time did not appear to meet with the success which it merited. Lady Harriott, unfortunately, was not handsome; the family stock of beauty which she inherited from her mother had been sadly amalgamated with the flat and homely features of Sidney Lord Godolphin, than whom a more ordinary individual, if one may judge from his portraits, seems not to have existed. Moreover, her portion was undecided, and the noble suitor whom her friends

* Coxe Papers.

sought for her, at first but coldly allowed her merits; hinting, though "but very softly," that whilst he admired the fine qualities which Sir John described, he could have wished her external charms had been equal to those of her heart and understanding.*

This half-disclosed objection, Sir John Vanburgh met with the observation, that though he "did not believe Lady Harriott would ever have a beautiful face, he could plainly see that it would prove a very agreeable one, which he thought infinitely more valuable, especially when he observed one thing in her—namely, a very good expression of countenance. In short," added the skilful reasoner, "it was certain Lady Harriott's figure would be good; and he would pawn all his skill in such matters, if in two years time the Lady Harriott would not be as much admired as any lady in town."

Lord Clare did not in the least contradict what Sir John said, but allowed "that he might very possibly be right." This conversation took place in January, 1714; and two years elapsed before the subject was formally resumed between the Duchess's subservient friend, and his patron, Lord Clare. In the course of these two years, Lord Clare became Duke of Newcastle, and the

* Coxe Papers. See Appendix.

Duchess of Marlborough's anxiety to hail him as a relative was probably not diminished by that circumstance. The Duke, meantime, had seen no woman who exactly came up to his ideas of what his wife ought to be, in order that he might expect from her that domestic happiness to which he appears to have aspired. The idea of being connected with the Marlborough family, and the expectation of a considerable fortune if he connected himself with a member of that wealthy house, added to the constant representations of Sir John Vanburgh in favour of the alliance, maintained the desire, which the Duke had always in some degree cherished, of uniting himself with the Lady Harriott. At the same time, having made many observations upon the bad education given to ladies of rank in that day, the Duke felt, as he expressed to his friend Vanburgh, a much greater anxiety to find in his wife an intelligent and amiable friend and companion, than to carry away what would be commonly considered a prize, either of beauty or of fortune. But at length, weary of delay, he wrote to his friend Vanburgh that he had formed a resolution of marrying somewhere before the winter was over, and again entered upon the subject of Lady Harriott.*

This cessation of the treaty is explained by the

* Coxe Papers, vol. xlvi. p. 148.

Duchess of Marlborough, in the curious correspondence from which this narrative is taken. The original proposal, on her side, to Lord Clare, was to be so managed as to save him the pain of sending her grace a refusal, if he declined it: a negociation, with respect to fortune, was carried on between Vanburgh and a mutual friend of Lord Clare and of the Duchess.

As it might be expected, the treaty had gone on very smoothly, until the conversation turned upon money. Some "civil things about the alliance," to use the Duchess's phrase, had been said; but the dowry required to make the plain Lady Harriott saleable was no less a sum than forty thousand pounds. Upon this demand the Duchess had broken off the negociation, concluding, as she afterwards declared, that the Duke of Newcastle or his friends must think such a demand the most effectual way of breaking off the affair; since," as she added, "Lady Harriott was neither a 'monster nor a citizen,' and she had never heard of such a fortune in any other case, unless it were an only child." Yet to show, as she states, that she was not mercenary, she had afterwards refused a most considerable offer for her grand-daughter, where she could have had her own conditions. In such business-like and bartering terms did the custom of the day lead the Duchess to express

herself upon a matter of no less importance than happiness, or unhappiness, the utmost bliss or the most hopeless misery.

Two years, therefore, had elapsed before anything more was done; and Lady Harriott, meantime, had been introduced by her grandmother into the fashionable circles of Bath; and that circumstance again aroused the apprehensions of the cautious Pelham Holles. Whether he dreaded that she would there have formed some acquaintance which might have produced an entanglement of the heart — whether he fancied that the influence which her grandmother exercised over her might induce the young lady to accept a desirable match when her affections were elsewhere bestowed; or whether he was merely desirous of ascertaining how far the scenes of dissipation had power to elicit foibles and failings in the young Lady Harriott—does not appear. From the strict inquiries which he anxiously and repeatedly made when the treaty was renewed, of her conduct at Bath, we must however conclude that the peer, in spite of his determination to marry before the winter was over, was not so indiscreet in his haste as to rush into bonds, unless he were well satisfied that they would produce a happy union. Such were his notions of the sex at this time, that, to use his own words to Vanburgh, he almost despaired

of meeting with a woman whose ideas of conjugal duty would accord with his own expectations. Impressed with the difficulty of a choice, he earnestly and emphatically entreated Sir John Vanburgh to inform him if he knew anything of the lady, that could abate the extraordinary impression that he had received of her merits.

Sir John could add nothing disparaging to the high encomiums which he had passed on Lady Harriott, and a fresh negociation was accordingly entered upon with the Duchess, who expressed herself delighted with the renewal of a treaty which she had considered as finally abandoned. Sir John, meantime, was very zealous, and the affair proceeded flourishingly, and ended, eventually, in the marriage of Lady Harriott and the Duke of Newcastle.*

So far Vanburgh seems to have acted well his part of a friend and mediator; but he soon found that matchmaking was by no means the most desirable occupation in the world. Although he had, by successful arguments, brought the Duke of Newcastle "into the mind to marry

* This marriage, unhappily for the Duke, was childless, thus disappointing his hopes of being able proudly to deduce the origin of his posterity from the great Marlborough. —Coxe Papers, vol. xlvi. p. 148.

Lady Harriott," the Duchess appears to have acted towards him unhandsomely and ungratefully. It seems to have been her grace's mode for avenging Sir John's errors of taste and miscalculations at Blenheim, to remove her confidence from him in the nice affair which he had had her commands to bring about to another useful friend. Whilst the architect and his patroness were together at Bath and at Blenheim, she never mentioned a syllable of the projected marriage to him, but, by transferring the negociation to one Mr. Walter, implied that Vanburgh was no longer worthy of the trust she had reposed in him. It was not long before Vanburgh, indignant at her conduct, addressed to her grace a letter, explanatory but respectful, excepting when, in the conclusion, he declares that he should be surprised, but not sorry, to find that she had imposed her commands and entrusted her commission to some other person.*

The Duchess, in her reply to Sir John Vanburgh, entered distinctly into the whole process by which the match had been revived and perfected. She acknowledged her obligations to Sir John Vanburgh; she explained her conduct, if not satisfactorily, at least graciously; and con-

* This letter, together with the rest of this curious correspondence, is to be seen in the Appendix.

cluded by declaring, " that if any third person should say that she had behaved ill to Sir John, she should be very sorry for it, and should be very ready even to ask his pardon."*

Before this temperate letter reached him, Sir John Vanburgh, not to his credit, had sent a very abusive, coarse, and insolent epistle. It appears that he had discovered that the Duchess had devolved the completion of Blenheim into other hands. Under the excitement produced by this discovery, he gave vent to a torrent of invective, which seldom accompanies a good cause.

The Duchess, as it happened, received this singular ebullition from her former confidante before her own letter was despatched; whereupon she took up her pen, and, in the excess of her wrath, added a postscript; concluding in these words:—" Upon the receiving of that very insolent letter, upon the eighth of the same month, 'tis easy to imagine that I wished to have had the civility I expressed in the letter back again, and was very sorry that I had fouled my fingers in writing to such a fellow." †

Sir John Vanburgh's reply had called forth this elegant conclusion; he appears to have been resolved to prove that he could equal her grace in vituperation. In order clearly to understand

* Coxe MSS. † Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 148.

the merits of the case, it is necessary to give at length the letter which the Duchess "fouled her fingers" to answer. It would be a pity to garble so characteristic a document.

SIR JOHN VANBURGH TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

"Whitehall, Nov. 8th, 1716.

"MADAM,—When I writ to your grace on Thursday last, I was much at a loss what could be the ground of your having dropped me, in the service I had been endeavouring to do you and your family with the Duke of Newcastle, upon your own sole motion and desire. But having since been shown, by Mr. Richards, a large packet of building papers sent him by your grace, I find the reason was, that you had resolved to use me so ill in respect of Blenheim, as must make it impracticable to employ me in any other branch of your service.

"These papers, madam, are so full of *far-fetched laboured accusations, mistaken facts, wrong inferences, groundless jealousies, and strained constructions, that I should put a very great affront upon your understanding if I supposed it possible you could mean anything in earnest by*

* Ibid. p. 145.

them, but to put a stop to my troubling you any more. You have your end, madam, for I will never trouble you more, unless the Duke of Marlborough recovers so far to shelter me from such intolerable treatment.

"I shall in the mean time have only this concern on his account, (for whom I shall ever retain the greatest veneration,) that your grace having, like the Queen, thought fit to get rid of a faithful servant, the Tories will have the pleasure to see your glassmaker, Moor, make just such an end of the Duke's building as her minister Harley did of his victories, for which it was erected.

"I am your Grace's

"Most obedient servant,

"J. VANBURGH.

"If your grace will give me leave to print your papers, I'll do it very exactly, and without any answer or remark *but this short letter attached to the tail of them, that the world may know I desired they might be published.*"

The Duke of Marlborough, it appears, was kept in ignorance of all the missiles of abuse which were passing between his Duchess and her once faithful servant. But, observing that Vanburgh absented himself from Marlborough-

house and Blenheim, the kind-hearted Marlborough inquired into the cause of that circumstance. Throughout the whole affair he seems to have been moderate, unoffending, and just, as it was his nature to be; but eventually he coincided with his wife, and the building of Blenheim was transferred to other hands.

Upon hearing that the Duke had inquired for him, Vanburgh wrote a long explanation, in which some traces of regret are discoverable. Since it is, in the main points, merely a recapitulation of the whole affair, we must refer the reader, who may be curious to judge for himself upon this amusing controversy, to the Appendix of this volume.

Severe and real trials awaited the Duchess, and ought to have bowed her head in humility, and softened her vindictive feelings to others. But the discipline of events appears to have effected but little change in her proud and fierce disposition.

Whilst wealth and undisputed honours might procure a cheerful retirement, it was the will of Providence that the decline of these two celebrated persons into the sear and yellow leaf should be visited by those bereavements which anticipate Time in his devastations upon the frame of man, and aid him of his privilege in

furrowing the brow, and making the cheek wan. From the period when they could discern the opening characters of infancy in their children, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough had considered themselves peculiarly blessed in two of their daughters—Elizabeth Countess of Bridgewater, and Anne Countess of Sunderland. The world corroborated by its testimony the good opinion of the parents. Lady Bridgewater was domestic in her habits, affectionate, dutiful, and religious. She appears to have taken less part in political affairs than her sisters, Lady Rialton and Lady Sunderland, who were evidently esteemed by the Tory party to be the chief female supporters of their adversaries.* Yet Lady Bridgewater, in common with the rest of her family, had evinced her displeasure at the dismissal of her mother, and the change of the ministry in 1711-12. When, at that time, it happened that the presentation of Prince Eugene took place, and all the Tory courtiers, "monstrous fine," as Swift described them, thronged to see the Queen present him with a diamond sword, the Countess of Bridgewater is thus mentioned among the "birth-day chat" with which Swift consoled Stella for his absence.

* See Swift's Letters.

"I saw Lady Wharton, as ugly as the devil, coming out in a crowd, all in an undress; she had been with the Marlborough daughters and Lady Bridgewater in St. James's, looking out of the window, all undressed, to see the sight." *

This is one of the few instances in which we find Lady Bridgewater mentioned in public; and, in March 22nd, 1714, her brief career closed, the small-pox proving fatal to her, as it had done to her brother. She was only twenty-six years of age at the time of her death.

Lady Sunderland had a more distinguished, and, as far as we may judge, a more arduous part in life to act, than either of her sisters. Unlike Lady Rialton, afterwards Lady Godolphin, and the Duchess of Manchester, she retained the affection of her imperious mother, even through political turmoils, in which the Duke of Sunderland often differed from the Duchess, and displeased the Duke of Marlborough. The Countess was one whom remarkable worldly advantages could not withdraw from a consciousness that this state, however blessed, is only a preparatory process by which the human heart is to be purified. She lived in the world uncorrupted; uninjured by admiration, which pursued her, from friend or foe; untainted by ambition, the besetting failing of

* Ibid. vol. xiv. p. 131.

her family; beautiful, but nobly aspiring to be somewhat more than the beauty paramount of the day; accomplished, yet humble; of a lively imagination, yet of unimpeached prudence, and of sound judgment. Station, fashion, and, yet more, the conscious influence of her fascinating qualities, were enjoyed by her in safety; for she had that within, a pure and devout heart, which kept her unspotted from the world.

Lady Sunderland had been much at court, until, upon the Queen's dismissal of her mother, she resigned her offices. Her social reputation was such, and her power in consequence so acknowledged, that Swift, who stood watching which way the gales of royal favour blew, was not ashamed to own his adulatory advances towards her, on one occasion when the Queen's indecision left him in considerable doubt as to which party would prevail.

"I was to-day at court," writes the double and obsequious divine, in 1711, "and resolved to be very civil to the Whigs, but saw few there. When I was in the bedchamber talking to Lord Rochester, he went up to Lady Burlington, who asked him who I was, and Lady Sunderland and she whispered about me. I desired Lord Rochester to tell Lady Sunderland, I doubted she was not

as much in love with me as I was with her, but he would not deliver my message."*

After the return of the Duke and Duchess to England, it was the arduous office of the Countess of Sunderland to interpose her mild influence between the hasty temper of her husband and the overbearing spirit of her mother. She was the only one of "Marlborough's daughters" who could brook the maternal authority, exercised even over her grown-up children with unsparing rigour; and Marlborough regarded this dutiful and forbearing child with peculiar affection, on that very account. Yet it was evident, after her decease, that she both respected and loved her mother, since to her care she confided those whom she herself most loved.†

In her husband's temper and propensities, Lady Sunderland found that counterbalance to her many worldly advantages, which those who enjoy the happiest lot must in this world experience. Lord Sunderland, from the account of historians, appears to have been of a factious, unhappy spirit; to have quarrelled with his best friends; to have failed in his ambition, not from want of abilities, but from want of conduct, and to have been

* Swift's Letters, vol. xiv. p. 90.

† Coxe, vol. vi. quarto, p. 615.

alienated, by his rash and conceited deportment, from those who could alone save and serve him.* He had also a turn for extravagance, and a passion for gaming; and the last years of his more discreet wife were embittered by anxiety respecting a suitable provision for his children, an anxiety which events fully justified in the imprudent marriage which the Earl formed after her death.

Yet was the Countess sincerely devoted to this uncongenial being, to whom political interests had caused her to be united at an age when she was too young to form a judgment upon such matters. When he was absent in Vienna, on an embassy, she composed a prayer, found among her papers after her death, dictated by the most ardent attachment to her husband, and by the purest and most exalted devotion to her Maker.† One would be apt to think highly of that man who could inspire such a woman with such an affection, but that daily and hourly we witness how the most disinterested and warmest feelings are bestowed by female hearts on unworthy objects, and how they are perpetuated by a sense of duty, by habit, by gratitude.

Lady Sunderland had long suffered from the

* See Cunningham and others.

† See Appendix.

approaches of a mortal disorder, which she sustained with the spirit that became her. In her patience and christian resignation, she was consistent to the rest of her conduct. On the 15th of April, 1714, very shortly after the death of her sister, she was removed to a happier state; a fever, with which her impaired constitution could not struggle, closing, thus abruptly and mercifully, a life which might have lingered underneath the less violent attacks of a chronic disease.

Her death was a severe blow to both her parents. In her, the Duchess lost the only solace which filial duty could supply; for her remaining daughters loved her not, and even from her grandchildren she failed to experience comfort. Among her mother's papers was found the following letter, eloquent in its simple beauty, and deeply affecting to the parents, who could trace, in its touching requests, the pure but fretted spirit of their anxious child. The Duchess, according to her usual custom, had endorsed it with these words: "A copy of what my dear daughter wrote to her Lord, not to be given to him till after she was dead."*

"Altrop, Sept. 9, 1716.

"I have always found it so tender a subject

* Coxe, p. 361.

(to you, my dear,) to talk of my dying, that I have chose rather to leave my mind in writing, which, though very, very insignificant, is some ease to me. Your dear self and the dear children are my only concern in the world; I hope in God you will find comfort for the loss of a wife, I am sure you loved so well, not to want a great deal. I would be no farther remembered, than what would contribute to your ease, which is to be careful (as I was) not to make your circumstances uneasy by living beyond what you have, which I could not, with all the care that was possible, quite prevent. When you have any addition, think of your poor children, and that you have not an estate to live on, without making some addition by saving. You will ever be miserable if you give way to the love of play. As to the children, pray get my mother, the Duchess of Marlborough, to take care of the girls, and if I leave any boys too little to go to school; for to be left to servants is very bad for children, and a man can't take the care of little children that a woman can. For the love that she has for me, and the duty that I have ever shown her, I hope she will do it, and be ever kind to you, who was dearer to me than my life. Pray take care to see the children married with a prospect of happiness, for in that you will show your kind-

ness to me; and never let them want education or money while they are young. My father has been so kind as to give my children fortunes, so that I hope they won't miss the opportunity of being settled in the world for want of portions. But your own daughter may want your help, which I hope you will think to give her, though it should straiten your income, or to any of mine, should they want it. Pray let Mr. Fourneaux get some good-natured man for Lord Spencer's governor, whom he may settle with him before he dies, and be fit to go abroad with him. I beg of you to spare no expense to improve him, and to let him have an allowance for his pocket to make him easy. You have had five thousand pounds of the money you know was mine, which my mother gave me yearly; whenever you can, let him have the income of that for his allowance, if he has none any other way. And don't be as careless of the dear children as when you relied upon me to take care of them, but let them be your care though you should marry again; for your wife may wrong them when you don't mind it. You owe Fanchon, by a bond, twelve hundred pounds, for which I gave her four score pounds a year interest. Pray, whenever it is in your power, be kind to her and to her children, for she was ever faithful to me. Pray burn all my letters

in town or in the country. We must all die, but it is hard to part with one so much beloved, and in whom there was so much happiness, as you, my dearest, ever were to me. My last prayers shall be to the Lord Almighty, to give you all blessings in this world, and grant that we may meet happy in the next.

"A. SUNDERLAND."

"Pray give Lady Anne my diamond earrings; the middle drops are my mother's; and give Dye my pearl necklace and watch; and give Lady Frances Spencer my diamond buckle; and give Mr. Fourneaux the medal of gold which you gave me when I was married; and the little picture I have of yours and of Lord Spencer's."

This letter was immediately forwarded by Lord Sunderland, through his steward, to the Duchess, who lost no time in announcing to him her ready compliance with her daughter's last request; and she is said to have conscientiously performed the important duties which, from maternal affection, she had undertaken. Her zeal, and her real though unaffected and unsentimental grief for her daughter's loss, are naturally exemplified in the following letter.*

* See Coxe, p. 619, and also Lord Sunderland's answer.

"May 13, 1716.

"I send you enclosed that most precious letter you sent me yesterday by Mr. Charlton. You will easily believe it has made me drop a great many tears, and you may be very sure that to my life's end I shall observe very religiously all that my poor dear child desired. I was pleased to find that my own inclinations had led me to resolve upon doing everything that she mentions before I knew it was her request, except taking Lady Anne, which I did not offer, thinking that since you take Lady Frances home, who is eighteen years old, she would be better with you than me, as long as you live, or with the servants that her dear mother had chose to put about her, and I found by Mr. Charlton this thought was the same that you had. But I will be of all the use that I can to her, in everything that she wants me, and if I should happen to live longer than you, though so much older, I will then take as much care of her as if she were my own child. I have resolved to take poor Lady Anne Egerton, who, I believe, is very ill looked after. She went yesterday to Ashridge, but I will send for her to St. Albans, as soon as you will let me have dear Lady Dye; and while the weather is hot, I will keep them two and Lady Harriot, with a little

family of servants to look after them, and be there as much as I can; but the Duke of Marlborough will be running up and down to several places this summer, where one can't carry children, and I don't think his health is so good as to trust him by himself. I should be glad to talk to Mr. Fourneaux, to know what servants there are of my dear child's you do not intend to keep, that if there is any of them that can be of use in this new addition to my family, I might take them for several reasons. I desire, when it is easy to you, that you will let me have some little trifle that my dear child used to wear in her pocket, or any other way; and I desire Fanchon will look for some little cup she used to drink in. I had some of her hair not long since that I asked her for, but Fanchon may give me a better lock at the full length."

The children thus entrusted to their maternal grandmother became a solace to the Duke and Duchess, and were nurtured with attention, both to the elegance of their minds and to their happiness. There is nothing more touching than the affection of the old for infants, nothing more consolatory than to observe how beautifully Providence renews the greatest of all pleasures, in re-

storing to the grandfather the tenderness, and the consequent parental joys, of the father. Those who have represented Marlborough as of a narrow spirit, and a cold, designing heart, should have beheld him gazing with delight upon his youthful granddaughters, when taking lessons in music and dancing, or performing such parts as were suited to their capacity in certain dramas, which turned often upon the exploits of the grandfather, and on the gifts and graces of the grandmother. In the decline of life, Marlborough listened, with a pleasure which he cared not to conceal, to the recital of his own deeds from infantine lips; and there were others, distinguished in their way, who deemed it not beneath their high vocations to aid such entertainments as were the recreations of the beloved grandchildren at Holywell House, or at Windsor Lodge.*

Dr. Hoadley, at this time Bishop of Bangor, and afterwards of Winchester, was the intimate associate, and, as it seems from certain anecdotes, the spiritual friend of Marlborough in his latter days. He was a controversialist of the first order, had signalised himself in an intellectual combat of this kind against Atterbury, and also, on a later occasion, in the noted Bangorian contro-

* Coxe, vol. iii. p. 645.

versy, in which his adversary, the celebrated William Law, is said to have gained the ascendency. The Bishop, with all his learned acquirements, was formed to enliven society by his cheerfulness, as well as to elevate its tone by his superior intellect. He entered, with the kindness that becomes the learned so well, into the amusements and pursuits of the young favourites of his illustrious friend. Though not a dramatist himself, he was the father of two very celebrated dramatists, at this time children; the one, Dr. Benjamin Hoadley, physician to George the Second, and the author, among other plays, of the "Suspicious Husband;" and the other, Dr. John Hoadly, a clergyman, whose most serious composition was the oratorio of Jephtha, but who thought it not inconsistent with his sacred character to write humorous farces, and to perform with Garrick and Hogarth a parody upon the ghost scene of Julius Cæsar.*

Dr. Hoadley, though the father of dramatists,

* Hogarth personated the Ghost of Brutus, but, being wholly deficient in memory, he was unable to commit to memory the few lines which constituted his part. The verses he was to deliver were therefore pasted in very large letters on the outside of an illuminated lantern, so that he could read them as he came on the stage, with that appropriate implement in his hand.

was not, if we may believe Pope, the most lively writer among the many noted controversialists of the day. He dwelt in long sentences, to which Pope alluded when he wrote

"————Swift for closer style,*
But Hoadly for the period of a mile."

Yet the younger performers in the play of "All for Love," to which the good-natured Bishop wrote a prologue, thought his effusions, no doubt, of the highest merit; and they turned upon a subject which they could both comprehend and enjoy, the great exploits of Marlborough. Perhaps it was the Bishop's elaborate verses which occasioned the Duchess's aversion to poetry, when so employed, and which produced the clause in her will, bequeathing to Glover and to Mallet one thousand pounds, upon condition of their not inserting a single line of verse in the biography which they had engaged to write of her husband.†

"All for Love"‡ was enacted with all the proprieties, the Duchess "scratching out some of the most amorous speeches, and no embrace al-

* Biographical Dict., Art. Hoadly.

† Coxe.

‡ The play-bill of "All for Love; or the World Well Lost," has been given at length by Dr. Coxe. It runs as follows:

lowed."* "In short, no offence to the company," Miss Cairnes, daughter of Sir Alexander Cairnes of Monaghan, and afterwards married to Cadwallader, eighth Baron Blayney,† was domesticated in the Marlborough family at the request of the Duchess, who, esteeming her mother, Lady Cairnes, took the daughter into her family and brought her up with her granddaughters, under the care of a governess, Mrs. La Vie, a relation of Lady Cairnes, and the daughter of a French refugee. Both these ladies were important additions to the social enjoyments of Holywell, or the Lodge. Lady Blayney, who lived to the age of eighty, became and continued an attached friend to the family. Her recollections furnished the descendants of the famed Duke with several anecdotes

Marc Anthony, Captain Fish, Page of the Duchess.
Ventidius, Old Mr. Jennings.
Sarapion, the High Priest, Miss Cairnes.
Alexis, Mrs. La Vie.
Cleopatra, Lady Charlotte Macarthy.
Octavia, Lady Anne Spencer.
Children of Marc Anthony, Lady Anne Egerton, Lady Diana Spencer.
(Scene, the Bow-window Room.)
(Great screens for changing scenes.)

* Coxe.

† His second wife. He married first a Miss Talbot, niece of the Duke of Shrewsbury.—Burke's Peerage.

of their ancestors, and amongst others with the foregoing account of the play.

Mrs. La Vie, the other inmate of the family, was a woman also of considerable attainments. She translated into French a letter addressed by the Duchess to George the First, on one occasion, in order to clear up some suspicions of her loyalty. Mrs. La Vie was also a frequent visitant amongst the select parties given under the agreeable form of suppers, by Lady Darlington, to George the First, where, excepting his Majesty, persons of taste and distinguished talent were alone admitted.*

Surrounded by this agreeable domestic society, the Duke and Duchess might have expected to pass serenely into an old age of peace. But both public and private events occurred, which depressed, though they could not render morose, a mind so kindly and amiably constituted as that of Marlborough, whilst certain circumstances aroused once more the fiery spirit of the Duchess, who rejoiced in the whirlwind.

She had lived to see, among other strange vicissitudes, her former foe, Harley, deprived not only of power, but of liberty; he had been imprisoned two years in the Tower, when his im-

* Coxe.

peachment, and the sudden abandonment of that contested measure, excited public curiosity as to the cause of so unaccountable an affair.

The Duke of Marlborough was present at several of the debates which related to this singular business. He voted with the minority who were opposed to Harley. The Duchess was reported, also, to have been "distracted with disappointment," when the proceedings against Harley were quashed by some secret influence. Yet, notwithstanding her well-known hostility to Harley, and her equally well-known adherence to Whig principles, there have been distinct statements of her having intrigued with the Jacobite party, at that time justly formidable to the King of England.

Before the acquittal of Lord Oxford took place, report at that time, and tradition has since, alleged, that Mr. Auditor Harley, the unfortunate statesman's brother, waited privately on the Duchess of Marlborough, and showed her a letter which had been written formerly from the Duke to the Pretender. Mr. Harley, after reading this letter, declared to the Duchess that it should be produced at Lord Oxford's trial, if that proceeding were not instantly abandoned. The Duchess, it is stated, seized the letter, com-

mitted it to the fire, and defied her foe. Mr. Harley then thus addressed her:—"I knew your grace too well to trust you; the letter you have destroyed is only a copy; the original is safe in my possession." * This is one anecdote, unsupported by any authority, implicating the Duchess in the charge of a treasonable correspondence. It may be remarked, that the previous vacillating and crooked course which Marlborough had pursued with respect to the exiled family, in the time of William the Third, may have given rise to this imputation.

Another statement, bearing an aspect of greater probability, was communicated by Mr. Serjeant Comyns, afterwards Chief Baron of the Exchequer, to the late respected and gifted Benjamin West, Esq., President of the Royal Academy. Mr. West transmitted the circumstance to Mr. Gregg, a barrister, from whose handwriting the anecdote was noted down in the Biographia Britannica.

Lord Harley, the eldest son of Lord Oxford, attended by Mr. Serjeant Comyns, waited, it is said, on the Duke of Marlborough, to request his grace's attendance at the trial of the attainted peer. The Duke, somewhat discomposed, in-

* Biographia Britannica.

quired what Lord Oxford wanted of him, and was answered by Mr. Comyns, that it was only to ask his grace a question or two. The Duke became more and more agitated, and walked about the room for a quarter of an hour, evidently much embarrassed; but at length he inquired of Lord Harley on what account his attendance at the trial was required. Lord Harley answered, that it was only for the purpose of certifying his handwriting; and, to the still further questions of the Duke, informed him that Lord Oxford had in his possession all the letters which he had ever received from the Duke since the Revolution. Upon this, Marlborough became extremely perturbed, pacing the room to and fro, and even throwing off his wig in his passion; and to the further interrogatories of Mr. Comyns, as to what answer they should carry back to Lord Oxford, he returned for answer, "Tell his lordship I shall certainly be there." "This," adds the retailer of this anecdote, "is the true reason why Lord Oxford was never brought to trial." *

This strange story has been refused credit by the able biographer of Marlborough, who has dismissed the imputation with contempt. It appears, indeed, on several accounts, not to be

* Biographia Britannica.

worthy of credit. Harley might have produced such letters long before, if he had it in his power, in order to weaken the party opposed to him, amongst whom the most violent was Lord Sunderland, son-in-law of Marlborough, who was greatly incensed when the trial of Harley was stopped. Yet Sunderland, it afterwards appears, was not devoid of suspicions regarding the Duchess's fidelity to the ruling powers; or, probably, domestic differences caused him, at a subsequent period, to imbibe, with unfair readiness, prejudices which were diligently inculcated to her disadvantage. There were, also, other public events which aggravated dissensions already begun, and widened differences of opinion, even among the few who could remain dispassionate observers of the greatest of all national infatuations, the South Sea scheme.

The pernicious policy of William the Third, in borrowing money from the public, and paying the interest of those sums by means of certain taxes, has been justly blamed as the origin of much embarrassment and calamity to the country.* A species of gaming, new to the nation, and arising out of the uncertain state of public credit, became fascinating to the commercial

* Macauley, p. 290.

world, and a spirit of adventure pervaded all ranks and conditions of society.

The anxiety of both Houses of Parliament to reduce the national debt fostered a scheme, brought to bear in the eleventh year of Queen Anne's reign, of forming a fund for paying the interest of the debt, in an annuity of six per cent. All taxes upon wines, sugar, vinegar, tobacco, India silks, and other goods, were appropriated to the aid of this fund, and to the shareholders was granted the monopoly of a trade to the South Sea, or coast of Peru, in Mexico; and proprietors of navy bills and other securities were incorporated into a company which, under the name of the South Sea Company, was soon regarded by the public as a community possessing the most enviable privileges. The first scheme of this notable project was framed by Harley. Sunderland afterwards carried it on, and by this means sought to strengthen his parliamentary interest. A wild spirit of speculation inflamed the minds of innumerable suitors to the ministers, through whose influence shares were alone obtained; and even the prudent and experienced Marlborough was tempted, upon the revival of the scheme in the present reign, to increase the share which he had originally held in the stock.*

* Coxe.

Sir John Blount, a scrivener, who matured, if it could be so called, the South Sea scheme, had formed his plan upon the Mississippi scheme, which in the preceding year had failed in France, and had ruined whole families. Undeterred by this warning, even the wary Duchess of Marlborough sought and obtained from Lord Sunderland subscriptions for herself, and her friends and connexions, as the greatest boon that ministerial power could grant.

But to her sound, shrewd mind the fallacy of all the expectations which a greedy public formed, was very soon apparent. The Duchess was not one of those stars of our later days, before whom an astonished world bends with adoration. Mathematics and logic had never directed her powerful understanding. She was no political economist; her speculations on all such subjects arose out of the great practical lessons which she had witnessed. Her education had been limited. To arithmetic as a science she was a stranger. "Lady Bute," says the ingenious writer of recently published anecdotes of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, "sat by her (the Duchess) whilst she dined, or watched her in the curious process of casting up her accounts—curious, because her grace, well versed as she was in all matters relating to money, such as getting it, hoarding it,

and turning it to the best advantage, knew nothing of common arithmetic. But her sound, clear head could invent an arithmetic of its own. To lookers-on it appeared as if a child had scribbled over the paper, setting down figures here and there at random; and yet every sum came right to a fraction at last, in defiance of Cocker." *

Yet it was this untaught mind, disturbed often by bursts of passion, and in love with wealth and all other worldly advantages,—it was the Duchess of Marlborough, who, of all her class, was the first to detect the fallacy of that scheme by which a whole nation had been ensnared. When the value of the stock rose to an unprecedented height, and the public were more than ever infatuated by false hopes, she saved her husband and her family from ruin, not only by her foresight but by her firmness. Let those who would wholly preclude women from any participation in masculine affairs, remember how often their less biassed judgment, their less employed hours, have been made available to warn and to save. The Duchess happily had sufficient influence over her husband to rescue his disposable property from any further investment in the

* Anecdotes of Lady M. W., edited by Lord Wharncliffe, vol. i. p. 74.

South Sea Stock. She resisted all the entreaties of Sunderland to employ any further portion of capital in the scheme; she foresaw that no profit would now satisfy the public mind, excited to an unnatural degree, and predicted that the fall of the stock would be as rapid as the rise. She not only withheld the Duke's hand, but persecuted him to sell out his shares, by which prudent step he realised, it is said, a hundred thousand pounds;* and this clear-sightedness on the Duchess's part was the more admirable that it was wholly singular. It was the age of speculation and of companies; and many of the nobility were at the head of some new ephemeral speculation. The Prince of Wales was made governor of the Welsh Copper Company; the Duke of Chandos, of the York Buildings; and the Duke of Bridgewater formed a third for building houses in London.†

Whilst these bubbles were engaging the public mind, the blow which severed Marlborough for ever from public life, and rendered even his beloved home cheerless, was struck whilst he was yet mourning at Holywell-house the death of his beloved daughters, more especially of the Countess of Sunderland. Throughout the whole of his life the Duke had suffered from intense head-

* Coxe, vol. i. p. 625. † Macauley, p. 308.

aches and giddiness,—warnings disregarded, as they often are, in the feverish pursuit of power, in the race for worldly honours, which the exhausted mind and irritable nerves permit not, ofttimes, even the most successful to enjoy.

On the twenty-eighth of May, 1716, not two months after his beloved daughter Anne had been removed from him, the Duke was attacked by palsy, which for some time deprived him of speech and of recollection. He was attended on this occasion by Sir Samuel Garth, who not only managed his disease with skill, but attended him with the devoted zeal of a partial friend.* The Duke slowly recovered to a condition not to be termed health, unless a man on the edge of a precipice can be said to be in safety. As a public man he was, indeed, no more; but it is satisfactory to the admirers of this great man to recollect that his last military counsels had been as judicious and as effective as those which he had originated on former occasions. His latest act as commander-in-chief was to concert those measures for defeating the rebellion which proved so successful; his latest prognostic with respect to public affairs was, that that rebellion would be crushed at Preston.†

From the first attack of the Duke's disorder, to

* Coxe. † Biographia Britannica.

his release from a state of debility, though not, as it has been represented, of imbecility, a gloom hung over his existence. His bodily and mental sufferings are said to have been aggravated by the Duchess's violent temper, and petulant attempts to regain power.* The assertion cannot surprise those who have observed, under various circumstances, characters which are not regulated by high and firm principles. The Duchess had kind and generous impulses, but no habit of self-government. The arbitrary spirit of an indulged wife had now become an unlimited love of sway; her affection for the Duke was not strong enough to teach her to quell for his sake the angry passions, or to check the bitterness of her satirical spirit, because the stings which she inflicted might wound the enfeebled partner of her youthful days.

After some weeks of indisposition, Marlborough was enabled to remove to Bath, where he was recommended to try the waters. When he entered that city, he was received with honours which he was little able to encounter. A numerous body of nobility and gentry hailed his approach, and the mayor and aldermen came, with due formalities, to greet him. It appears that he must very soon have recovered some por-

* Coxe.

tion of his former activity, if the following anecdote, related by Dr. William King, a contemporary, and principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxon, be credited.

"That great captain, the Duke of Marlborough," says Dr. King, "when he was in the last stage of life, and very infirm, would walk from the public rooms in Bath to his lodgings, in a cold, dark night, to save sixpence in coach-hire. If the Duke," he adds, "who left at his death more than a million and a half sterling, could have foreseen that all his wealth and honours were to be inherited by a grandson of my Lord Trevor's, who had been one of his enemies, would he have been so careful to save a sixpence for the sake of his heir? Not for his heir, but he would always have saved a sixpence." *

Whilst thus retaining what was more in him a habit than a passion, the Duke left Bath, to view with peculiar pleasure the progress of the great palace at Blenheim, where he expressed satisfaction on beholding that tribute to his former greatness. But the enjoyments of Marlborough's declining years were few and transient, whether they consisted in the exalting contemplation of a

* Political and Literary Anecdotes of his Own Time, by Dr. King.

noble structure, the suggestion, though not the gift, of a nation's gratitude; or in the small, the very small gratification of saving a sixpence, imputed to him by his contemporary; though it is possible, and to the good-natured it may appear probable, that to the humbled invalid, conscious of decay, the satisfaction of being able to resume old habits of activity, the habits of military life, may have been one source of the pleasure.

During November, however, in the same year of his first attack, the Duke was threatened with immediate death. The remaining members of his family hastened to bid him what they expected would prove a last farewell. Their parent, however, was for the time spared to them. Again he recovered his health sufficiently to remove to Marlborough house. His reason was happily restored to him, but the use of speech for some time greatly impaired. He recovered it, however, and conversed, though he could not articulate some words. His memory, and the general powers of his mind, were also spared. The popular notion of his sinking into imbecility is, therefore, unfounded, and in this respect it is unfair, and erroneous, to couple him with Swift.

> "From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
> And Swift expires a driveller and a show,"

are lines so familiar, that it is difficult to dis-

possess the imagination of the ideas which they have lodged there. Both of these celebrated men, indeed, suffered from the same mortal and humiliating disease; and the dire malady, which is no respecter of persons, afflicted the kindly, the humane, the pure, the religious Marlborough, and abased also the vigorous intellect of the coarse, selfish, and profane Swift. Both suffered from the same oppressing consciousness of diminished mental energy. The lucid intervals of Swift were darkened by a cruel sense of present powerlessness, and of past aberrations; and Marlborough is said, when gazing upon a portrait of himself, painted in his days of vigour, to have uttered the affecting exclamation, "That *was* a man!"* But here the similitude of the two cases ends. Marlborough was never reduced to that last degree of human distress, insanity; it appears by the journals of the House of Lords that he attended the debates frequently for several years after the commencement of his illness, and he performed the functions of his public offices with regularity. Marlborough was permitted by his Creator the use of reason, the power of reflection,—time, therefore, to arrange complicated worldly concerns, and to prepare for a happier sphere. Venerated by his friends, domestics,

* Scott's Life of Swift.

and relatives, Marlborough was permitted to his latest hour to share in the hallowed domestic enjoyments which by no immoral courses he had forfeited, by no disregard of others destroyed.

The very different termination of Swift's career —the retributive justice which, if we believed in spirits, poor Stella's ghost might have witnessed —the joyless close of an existence which no affectionate cares sought to cheer; the consignment of the wretched and violent lunatic to servants and keepers; the moody silence of the once eloquent and witty ornament of courtly saloons; the deep despair to which medicine could not minister, but which a moral influence might have alleviated, but which no son nor daughter's tender perseverance, with untaught, but often, perhaps, effectual skill, sought to solace;—these, with all other gloomy particulars of Swift's awful aberrations and death, on which not one light of consciousness was shown, must be by all remembered. Unloved he died; the affection which could, for the gentle Cowper, brave the desolating sight and company of hopeless insanity, was not the portion of one who, in this world of great moral lessons, had ever sacrificed others to his own gratification.

It was one of Marlborough's first acts, after his partial recovery, to tender to the King, through

Lord Sunderland, then in power, the resignation of his employments; but George the First, with a delicacy of feeling which could scarcely have been expected from his rugged nature, declined receiving it, declaring that "the Duke's retirement from office would excite as much pain as if a dagger should be plunged in his bosom." Marlborough, therefore, reluctantly, and certainly to the injury of his health, remained in office; and that accordance with his Majesty's wishes was attributed by the Duchess to Lord Sunderland, who stood in need of his father-in-law's assistance, in the administration which he had lately formed to the exclusion of Walpole and Townshend.

CHAPTER XII.

Third Marriage of Lord Sunderland—Calumnies against the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough—Interview between the Duchess and George the First—The result—Her differences with Lord Sunderland—Illness, death, and character of the Duke of Marlborough.—1721-22.

The Duchess of Marlborough tasted at this time sufficient of the real troubles of life to chasten a spirit less elastic than that which she possessed. Amongst various mortifications, Lord Sunderland inflicted a bitter pang, by marrying for the third time. His last wife, Judith, the daughter of Benjamin Tichborne, Esq., was not only of an unsuitable age, but inferior in rank, property, and connexions, to the Earl's station and circumstances. He aggravated this affront to the family of his former wife, by settling on her successor a portion of his property, to the injury of his children. No remonstrances on the part of the Duchess could prevent this annoying union, and

subsequent arrangement; but her letters to Lord Sunderland teemed with invective, whilst his lordship's replies were filled with bitter recriminations.

A mind so constituted as Lord Sunderland's was not calculated to rise above the littleness of revenge, when opportunity occurred. A report, which became current among the higher circles, that the Duchess favoured the Pretender, gave him probably less concern than it would at a former period have imparted. The Duchess, from consideration for her husband, concealed the rumour from him; but Sunderland summoned his father-in-law suddenly to his house, and acquainted him, in a coarse and unfeeling manner, with the calumny. The Duke returned to the Duchess greatly disturbed, and, in answer to her inquiries, informed her that she was accused of favouring the Pretender, and assisting him with a sum of money in his designs upon the throne.

The Duke, shattered in nerves, was greatly agitated by this abrupt disclosure; but it was received by the Duchess with disdain, and by an endeavour to soothe his irritation. But when her husband informed her that the King had heard the report, and that even the Duke was

supposed to share her treasonable practices, she resolved, with her wonted courage, to appear at the drawing-room, in order to ascertain how deeply the poison of calumny had worked.

On her first appearance she was received coldly; and when on a second occasion she repaired to court, a reception equally chilling, and equally contrasted with the marked attention which had formerly been paid to her, confirmed her fears; and upon this demonstration of displeasure she resolved to make her wrongs and her innocence known to the King.

The person through whose mediation the Duchess did not think it unseemly to address his Majesty, was the Duchess of Kendal, formerly Madame Schulemberg, the mistress, or, as some supposed, the left-handed wife of George the First; a lady whose mental and personal qualities were not, fortunately for the safety of virtue, such as to cast a lustre over the equivocal, if not disgraceful position in which she stood.

The Duchess of Kendal was at this time a "tall, lean, ill-favoured old lady," who had lived for forty years in all the contentment which virtue merits, and without the usual attractions of vice; mistress to a King, unimpassioned, inert, and respectably vicious—an "honest, dull Ger-

man gentleman,"* to whose darkened conscience habitual profligacy offered no offence.

The Duchess of Kendal, when she arrived in England, was destined to learn a lesson new to her; and the desire of political influence which she acquired, led to an interference of which she had never before dreamed. Her hatred to the Walpole family, whom the Duchess also detested, might probably account for their making common cause together, on the occasion which must now be described.

It was through the persuasion of the Duchess of Kendal that the Duchess of Marlborough obtained an interview with the King, at the apartments of his mistress in St. James's palace, in the same suite of rooms which were afterwards inhabited by the Countess of Suffolk, the favourite of his equally profligate and equally uninteresting son.

The Duchess of Marlborough, when thus introduced to the sovereign, delivered to his Majesty a letter containing a distinct denial of the charges against her. The plain and homely German monarch seems to have received her address favourably, nor was he a man to daunt, by his stern dignity, one who had been formerly

* Lord Chesterfield's Characters.

often in the presence of the cold, repulsive William of Orange. George was one who could scarcely offend or be offended, and who never sought to awe, and rarely to repulse. His manners and appearance were those of an elderly gentleman, rather of the middle than of the higher class, and his temper resembled that of other elderly gentlemen arrived at a comfortable period of life, when the composure, though not the apathy and weakness of age, begins to be manifested. The King required importunity to rouse him to exertion.* He has been described, from recollection, as a tall personage, somewhat pale, with an aspect rather good than august, and dressed in a style equally unobtrusive with his character: a dark tie-wig, a plain coat, waistcoat, and breeches, of snuff-coloured cloth, with stockings of the same colour, and a blue ribbon over all, constituted an attire widely different from the gay and costly habiliments of the gallants of his court, amongst whom the fantastic and studied style of dress of the Stuart days had not yet subsided into the mediocrity of modern days, which has gradually departed more and more widely from the models of former times.

* Lord Chesterfield. Horace Walpole.

The address delivered by the Duchess to his Majesty expressed in strong terms her surprise that any person "should, after all the trouble and danger she had been exposed to from her zeal for his Majesty and his family, suppose her capable of holding a correspondence with the King's greatest enemy, and that she should have been represented guilty of so black and foolish a crime." She entreated, in conclusion, to be allowed "to justify herself in such a manner as should seem possible to his Majesty's great wisdom."

After presenting her petition, the Duchess retired, and though pressed by the Duchess of Kendal to return, she refused to do so. It is remarkable, that notwithstanding the period of her exile, and her frequent intercourse with distinguished foreigners, the Duchess could not speak French;* any conversation, therefore, with the King was impracticable, for his Majesty neither understood English, nor ever took the slightest pains to acquire the language.

The reply of his Majesty to her grace's petition fully evinced the coolness of his sentiments

* Such was also the case even with the great Lord Clarendon, after many years of exile. See Mr. James's Life of Louis Quatorze, vol. iii.

towards her, however he might respect and confide in the Duke.*

"St. James's, Dec. 17, 1720.

"Whatever I may have been told on your account, I think I have shown, on all occasions, the value I have for the services of the Duke, your husband; and I am always disposed to judge of him and you by the behaviour of each of you in regard to my service. Upon which I pray God, my Lady Marlborough, to preserve you in all happiness.

"GEORGE R."

The Duchess was deeply disappointed upon the receipt of this letter. It was, she doubted not, dictated by the ministry at that time in power, of whom Horace Lord Walpole, Lord Sunderland, and Mr. Secretary Craggs, formed the most influential members.

Lord Walpole, the younger brother of the great minister, to whom the dislike of the Duchess extended, had been the early friend and fellow collegian of her deceased son; and what, perhaps, occasioned a greater bond of union in a mind so constituted, during the whole course of

* Coxe, p. 629.

his political career, a genuine Whig, and, in conjunction with Newcastle, Addison, Pulteney, Craggs, and others. He was, also, a member of the Hanover club, who had gone so far, in 1713, as to show their hatred of the Jacobite cause, by parading effigies of the Devil, the Pope, and the Pretender, in solemn procession from Charing Cross to the Exchange, and back to Charing Cross, where they were burnt.* But, notwithstanding the similarity of their political opinions, that administration from which the Duchess had once expected great results, had failed to secure her regard; probably from the little attention which they proffered to that vanity which, like some weeds, grew more vigorously in the shade.

The Duchess was not only already at variance with Lord Sunderland, another ministerial friend, but Mr. Craggs had fallen under her severe displeasure. Upon this statesman of equivocal character the suspicions of the Duchess now rested,† of having some years previously sent her an

* Mem. of Lord Walpole. Coxe, p. 8.

† The origin of Mr. James Craggs is said by Lady Mary W. Montague to be derived from a very low source. His father was footman to the Duchess of Norfolk, and a footman of the old school, who managed his mistress's intrigues as well as other household affairs.—Lady M. W. M.'s Letters. Hence the epigram in Horace Walpole's Letters.

anonymous letter of an offensive kind. She, therefore, in her reply to the King's laconic letter, gave vent to her suspicions, that since there was only one person in all the world whom she knew capable of calumniating her, that person "who might, perhaps, have malice enough to her, and dishonour enough in himself to be guilty of it, is Mr. Secretary Craggs."*

Her charge, daring as it was, fell to the ground. No notice was taken of this epistle, except a brief answer referring to the King's former reply; but the painful consequence of the Duchess's surmises was a total alienation from her son-in-law, Lord Sunderland; an alienation which lasted nearly until his death, which took place in 1722. So singular was the fate of this extraordinary woman in private life, that scarcely did she possess a tie which was not severed, or embittered, by worldly or political considerations.

The affair of the South Sea bubble, as it was called, a scheme designated by Lord Walpole as "weak in its projection, villanous in its execution, and calamitous in its end,"† was, in part, the cause of the coolness which thus severed Lord Sunderland from the family with whose interests his own had been so long bound up, and with

* Coxe, Appendix.

† Life of Lord Walpole, p. 20.

whom he held an hereditary alliance of affection, cemented by his happy marriage with one of its best and purest ornaments. Scheming and ill judging, but not venal, Lord Sunderland, during the height of the national infatuation, availed himself of that singular crisis, and made use of the South Sea bubble only as a political engine, and not to benefit his own embarrassed fortunes.

The frensy of this memorable scheme is said to have aided the settlement of the house of Hanover on the throne, by drawing off the attention of the people from the delirium of faction, to the almost equally dangerous mania for speculation.* As an aid to his party designs, Lord Sunderland, weakly, and with shortsighted policy, encouraged its transient influence. He incurred the deepest displeasure from his mother-in-law the Duchess; who might, perhaps, have forgiven him his share in the great imposition, had her family and his lordship's own children not have suffered in the general crash. His neglect of the interests of his children formed one of her greatest grounds of complaint; yet she received, supported, and educated several of those children, when, from his lordship's improvidence and his death, he

* Horace Walpole, Reminiscences.

left his numerous family to suffer from his embarrassments. Amongst other debts, he owed ten thousand pounds to the Duke of Marlborough; but his library, which, says Dr. Coxe, "was only rivalled by that of Lord Oxford in rarity and extent, was one of the items of his personal property, and now forms the basis of the noble collection at Blenheim."

It may appear reasonable to suppose that the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, having now tasted of the enjoyments, or endured the annoyances, of four successive courts, would gladly retire from all such scenes, thankful to escape to the quiet possession of leisure, and to the participation of such blessings as were spared to their old age. Vast riches were superabundantly their portion. Yet even wealth, which becomes a blessing or a curse according to the quality of that nature to which it is attached, has its inconveniences; and the immense accumulation of ready money appears to have caused the Duke considerable embarrassment.

"I beg pardon for troubling you with this," he wrote about this time, to a friend, "but I am in a very odd distress—too much ready money. I have now one hundred thousand pounds dead, and shall have fifty more next week; if you can

employ it in any way, it will be a very great favour to me."*

Surely so strange a dilemma as that of having a hundred and fifty thousand pounds too much for one's peace of mind, and of being able to dispense with the interest of such a sum, is of rare occurrence.

The Duchess, it appears, was not only averse to speculations in the South Sea scheme, but dreaded, at times, lest the national debt should be cancelled by a "sponge," as she frequently expressed it;† though that phrase relates to a later period, when the hated Walpole was in power.

The mere possession of wealth could, however, only have satisfied a mind far less grovelling than that of the Duchess. Power was her aim, her delight; a little brief authority her

* For the rest of this curious letter, see Appendix. It was kindly pointed out to me by Deputy Holmes, Esq. keeper of the Manuscripts, British Museum. That gentleman found it crumpled up among Dr. Coxe's papers, while he was arranging those manuscripts in their present convenient form. To this letter there is neither date nor address: on the back it is endorsed, "From the Duke of Marlborough;" Mr. Holmes surmises, in the hand-writing of Lord Godolphin. Archdeacon Coxe has not noticed the Duke's perplexity on the point expressed in this letter.

† See Opinions.

foible; intrigue her element, faction her recreation. It was impossible that the habits of a long life could be laid aside, and nothing could pacify her busy spirit. Accordingly, we find her just as much devoted to the acquisition of court favour in the decline of life, as she had been, before death had deprived her of those bright ornaments of society for whose sake she may have been supposed to have coveted royal favour with peculiar avidity. Neglected by the King, she received with eagerness the attentions of the Prince and Princess of Wales, who were at variance with the court, and who consequently cherished the malcontents. The Princess, afterwards Queen Caroline, was eventually a favourite with the Duchess; but, at an earlier period, it was perhaps sufficient that George the First habitually called his daughter-in-law "*cette diablesse Madame la Princesse*,"* to render the Duchess, who was affronted by the small account made of the Duke, and of her own influence, a warm partisan of the Princess of Wales.

Eager to pay her utmost court to the Princess, in June, 1720, the Duchess wrote to her friend Mrs. Clayton† a glowing description of a visit to Richmond, which she had paid to their

* Horace Walpole, Reminiscences.

† Coxe, p. 646.

royal highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, whose reception, as she declares, "of the Duke of Marlborough and poor me" would fill more than the paper on which she wrote. Not only was she graciously received by the Prince and Princess, but by the Lord Chamberlain and attendants, even to the pages of the bedchamber; so that the Duchess, long unused to receive such certain demonstrations of favour, fancied herself in a new world. Music of a superior kind gave gaiety to the entertainment; but the shrewd Duchess could very plainly see that the Princess was more charmed with the "music of the box and dice" than with any other instrument. Their royal highnesses had, at that time, a charming residence at Richmond, with beautiful walks, and woods wild and charming, but with a house scarcely handsome enough, as the Duchess thought, for the heir apparent.

The fashionable amusement of the day was ombre, a game in which the Duchess delighted, and in which she freely indulged with one Mr. Nevill, her companion on this occasion, whilst she acknowledged that listening to Mr. Nevill's singing, in which he excelled, was almost as good an amusement, and a qualification that

pleased her grace mightily, at no expense. Yet ombre riveted her, in spite of its ruinous expenses; and, what was more, she enjoyed her visit to Richmond greatly, notwithstanding that she lost a considerable sum of money. Royal condescension could gild over the unpleasant features even of that incident, although, as the Duchess humorously remarked, "she lost a great deal of money for one who is not in the South Sea!" Yet she came away, nevertheless, with the intention of playing at ombre as long as she could keep my Lord Cardigan and Mr. Nevill at Woodstock, considering that there were but few now in whom she had any interest after her death to induce her to save.

Such were some of the reflections of the Duchess, in quitting the lovely and cheerful scenes of Richmond Park. She came away, delighted with little and great things, full of commendations of the Princess, who had enchanted her, more especially by calling back one of her grandchildren and bidding her hold up her head; a thing of which the Duchess was telling Lady Charlotte every day; and reflecting how well princes might govern without bribing parliament, and be as absolute as

they pleased, if they chose ministers of good reputation, who had the interest of their country at heart.*

It is evident, from these comments, that the Duchess expected to resume her influence, when the heir apparent should succeed to the throne of his father. Her daughter, the Duchess of Montague, was, indeed, appointed mistress of the robes to Queen Caroline. But the Duchess of Marlborough discovered that her influence was but little appreciated by the Walpole party, from whom she expected so much. It could not even obtain a commission for her grandson; it could not prevent constant broils with Queen Caroline, which engendered hatred in the mind of the Duchess towards that eulogised Princess.

Seventeen years after the pleasant day at Richmond, when age and infirmity had soured her temper, and time had plainly proved to her that her importance in the society of the great was for ever fled, the Duchess altered her opinion of Queen Caroline.† So mutable are opinions

* Coxe, vol. vi. octavo, p. 646.

† "Our bishops," says the Duchess, writing of the Princess, whose condescension she had so greatly extolled, "are now about to employ hands to write the finest character that ever was heard of Queen Caroline; who, as it is no treason, I freely own that I am glad she is dead.

in this world; and so transitory those fashions which capriciously hold up to public favour, or to general execration, the characters of royal personages.

The Duke of Marlborough had continued for some years in the same precarious state of health, to which his first attack of disease had reduced him. He had lingered six years after the first stroke of palsy, suffering repeated attacks of the formidable disorder. His mind, though not totally enfeebled, must, in all probability, have been affected in some degree by those visitations which shackle the limbs, impede the motions of the tongue, and usually

Upon her great understanding and goodness there come out nauseous panegyrics every day, that make one sick, so full of nonsense and lies. There is one very remarkable from a Dr. Clarke, in order to have the first bishoprick that falls, and I dare say he will have it, though there is something extremely ridiculous in the panegyric; for, after he has given her the most perfect character that ever any woman had, or can have, he allows that she had sacrificed her reputation to the great and the many, to show her duty to the King and her love to the country. These are the clergyman's words exactly, which allows she did wrong things, but it was to please the King,—which is condemning him. I suppose he must mean some good she did to her own country, for I know of none she did in England, unless taking from the public deserves a panegyric."—Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 169. Duchess of Marlborough's Opinions.

render the nervous system cruelly susceptible. Yet still the Duke retained many of his usual habits, underwent the fatigue of journeys, entered into society, and occupied his latter days in arranging the testamentary disposition of that vast wealth which he had laboured so long and so eagerly to accumulate.

The Duke of Marlborough is vaguely stated, by his biographer, Dr. Coxe, to have died "immensely rich;" others have declared his fortune to have amounted, at his death, to nearly a million sterling. It therefore became a matter of much solicitude with him, and it appears to have been so with the Duchess, that his grace should make such a will as should prevent any of those harassing and destructive litigations which are sometimes entailed upon a family to whom great wealth is bequeathed. It was, in this instance, more particularly requisite that every precaution should be adopted. The Duke left a numerous posterity of grandchildren, some of whom might, if so disposed, represent their illustrious progenitor as incapacitated by his infirmity from making an adequate disposition of his effects. The Duchess, with her usual acuteness, foresaw that such obstacles to the administration of his affairs, after his death, might arise; and she adopted the plan of writing a detailed account of her husband's

condition, and of his last actions, from which narrative the following extracts are taken.*

"I think it proper, in this place, to give some account of the Duke of Marlborough's distemper, and how he was when he signed his will. The Duke of Marlborough was taken very ill at St. Albans, in May, 1716, with the palsy; but he recovered it so much as to go to Bath. He lived till June the sixteenth, 1721; and though he had often returns of this illness, he went many journeys, and was in all appearance well, excepting that he could not pronounce all words, which is common in that distemper; but his understanding was as good as ever. But he did not speak much to strangers, because when he was stopped, by not being able to pronounce some words, it made him uneasy. But to his friends that he was used to, he would talk freely; and since his death, Mr. Hanbury, the dowager Lady Burlington, and many others of my friends, have remarked to me, with pleasure, the things that they had heard him say, and the just observations he had made upon what others had said to him; and he gave many instances of remembering several things in conversation that others had forgot."

A year or more after this time, the Duke found

* See Dr. Coxe, p. 648.

it necessary to alter his will, and gave directions to Sir Edward Northey and Sir Robert Raymond to that effect. These gentlemen kept the will a long time, but after it was returned to his grace, in 1721, it was formally signed by him, in the presence of Lord Finch, of General Lumley, and of Dr. Samuel Clarke, the celebrated divine, Rector of St. James's. All of these gentlemen had read the will, at the request of the Duchess, before it had been signed. They were invited, on this occasion, to dine at Marlborough-house. The Duchess, in her plain, straightforward manner, gives the following account of the Duke's deportment in this, almost the last effort of his weakened understanding and sinking frame; the closing scene of that drama of many acts, in which he had played the parts of General, Statesman, and Diplomatist.

"As soon as dinner was over,"* writes the Duchess, "he asked if Mr. Green was come, (he was Sir Edward Northey's clerk;) and as soon as he came into the room he asked him how his mother did. Upon Mr. Green's being come to put the seals to the will, the Duke of Marlborough rose from the table, and fetched it himself out of his closet; and as he held it in his hand, he declared to the witnesses that it was his

* Coxe, p. 649.

last will, that he considered it vastly well, and was entirely satisfied with it; and then he signed every sheet of paper, and delivered it in all the forms. After this the witnesses all sat at the table, and talked for some time. Lord Finch and Dr. Clarke went away first, about business; and when General Lumley rose up to go, who staid a good while longer than the others, the Duke of Marlborough rose up too, and went to him and embraced him, taking him by the hand and thanking him for the favour he had done him."

Some months after this occurrence, the Duke made his last appearance in the House of Lords, leaving London in the spring, according to his usual custom.

On the sixteenth of June, 1722, this great, brave, and good man was removed from a world which probably would have ceased to be to him a scene of enjoyment, had not the benevolence of his disposition, and the strong nature of his domestic affections, secured to him a serenity which disease could not, with all its pangs, entirely destroy. Repeated attacks of palsy had shaken his once powerful frame. His intellect was weakened, but not wholly darkened. He had the blessing of being able, on his death-bed, to receive the consolations of prayer. Whilst

he lay for several days exhausted by disease, but aware that the great change was at hand, the Duchess, who remained with her husband until the spirit had passed away, inquired of her lord whether he had heard the prayers which had been read to him. "Yes, and I joined in them," were the last intelligible words which the dying Marlborough uttered. He was removed from a sofa to his bed, at the suggestion of his wife, and remedies were fruitlessly applied to assuage the sufferings which were soon to terminate. The Duchess, and the Duke's usual attendants remained near him; the rest of his family withdrew, as no symptoms of immediate danger were apparent. About four o'clock in the morning of the sixteenth of June, 1721, his soul returned to his Maker.

Thus sank to rest one of the bravest, and one of the most kindly-tempered of men. It were useless to descant at length on the character of one whose actions are indelibly engraved on every British heart, and with some of whose personal qualities we are rendered familiar from infancy. Yet, notwithstanding the able delineation of his intellectual and moral qualities, which has been at no remote period given to the world by Archdeacon Coxe, sufficient justice has not

hitherto been done to the amiable and respectable attributes which characterised Marlborough in private life.

It is remarkable, that of three biographers who were selected by the Duchess or her family to write the history of the hero, all died successively, before the task was even commenced. An impartial biography, if such a work be compatible with the weakness and prejudices of human nature, by a contemporary, a friend, an associate of Marlborough, would have been invaluable. The well-weighed opinions and careful narratives of those who knew him not, can but ill supply the deficiency.

Of the early education which was bestowed upon the great general, we know but little, except that it was extremely limited. He may be termed self-educated; necessity first—ambition afterwards, being his preceptresses. Yet the disadvantages of early neglect were never, even by the assiduous and gifted Marlborough, wholly overcome. To the close of his life, after his extensive commerce with the continental world, after serving under Turenne, and enjoying the intimacy of Eugene, he could not speak French without difficulty. He was probably wholly unacquainted with the dead languages: it was said that he

never could master even the orthography of his own.* With this disadvantage he rose to be one of the most accomplished courtiers, and one of the ablest diplomatists, in Europe. The energy and compass of a mind which could thus overcome difficulties of such vital importance as those which he must have encountered, when, from the pursuits of a mere soldier, he was compelled by his rapid elevation to enter into the arduous duties of despatches and correspondence, demand our admiration.

The moral character, as well as the intellectual powers, of Marlborough, underwent a remarkable change in the course of his chequered career. Few of those men, perhaps erroneously called heroes, could ever look back upon their progress to military fame with so little cause for remorse as John Duke of Marlborough. He left a name unsullied by cruelty. A remarkable combination of strong affections, with a natural suavity of temper, rendered him the beloved friend of men whose nature was not disposed to friendship. The crafty Sunderland and the unimaginative Godolphin loved him, after a fashion not of the world. To his own family he was peculiarly endeared, and, considering the effect of circumstances, singularly affectionate. His devotion to his wife,

* Newspapers of the day.

his love of his children, were not the only proofs which he gave of a kindly nature: his affections extended to all his numerous relatives. In one of his letters to the Duchess, he begs her to speak two kind words to his brother George, "as brother to him that loves you with all his heart;" and he is incessantly interceding for his sister, Mrs. Godfrey, whilst, at the same time, he owns that she was very indiscreet.*

Those graces of manner which, in Marlborough, are said to have disarmed his disappointed suitors, and to have conciliated men of all pursuits and all stations, proceeded from the kindliness of a happy temper, on which the habit and necessity of pleasing engrafted a dignified courtesy, of a higher quality than mere good breeding. His respect for himself and for others appeared alike in his conduct to his soldiers, and in his forbearance to the factious courtiers who forsook him when, on his dismissal from his employments in the reign of Anne, to know him was to know disgrace. He was, in the thorough sense of the phrase, as far as outward deportment was concerned, the kindly, high-bred English gentleman. Upon this fair picture some shadows must appear.

As a man of strict principle, and as a states-

* Coxe Papers, vol. xli. p. 76.

man of unsullied integrity, the character of Marlborough cannot so readily be delineated, as in his domestic sphere. The principle of self-advancement grew with his growth, and soiled those beautiful attributes of a nature so brave and benignant, that we are unwilling to believe he could indulge a selfish passion, or even cherish a weakness. From the days when he was a page in the court of the second Charles, permitting, to say the least, the disgraceful mediation of the Duchess of Cleveland, to the hour when, for the last time, he carried the sword of state on New Year's day before George the First, the ruling passion of Marlborough was gain — gain of patronage, of money, of fame, of power. For patronage he forbore to spurn the loose preference of a debased woman; for objects of less immediate acquisition he deliberately abandoned the interests of a sovereign and of a master at whose hands he had received unbounded favours. But it may be pleaded, that in deserting the cause of James the Second he adopted, in accordance with the first men of the day, the only measures by which his country could be rescued from the tyranny and bigotry of that wretched ruler. The plea may hold good, but no similar excuse can palliate his resuming a correspondence with the

exiled King, whose cause he had upon such just grounds relinquished.

The conduct of Marlborough in prosecuting the war so long, and, as it was urged, without adequate necessity, is even more open to censure than the previous passages of his public career. His success was intoxicating, even to his calm temper, and well-poised mind. But the man who could kindly familiarise himself with his soldiery, share their hardships, so as to obtain the name of the "Old Corporal," and inculcate the necessity of religious observances upon those who looked up to him with enthusiastic respect, was not likely to sacrifice those troops to a wanton desire for fame, unconnected with some signal public good. The letters of Marlborough plainly show that such was his conviction, and the treaty of Utrecht seemed to justify the conclusion that peace had arrived too soon,—if ever, except at the expense of future tranquillity, it can arrive too soon.

The tenderness of Marlborough towards the lowest in degree; his piety, which led him never to omit the duty of prayer before and after a battle; the sinking health which rendered his later campaigns severe trials to his harassed frame; his pining for home, and for her whom he re-

garded as the day-star of his existence; all tend to encourage the opinion, that concerning the much-contested question of the war, he was, if in error, a sincere believer in the necessity of its continuance, and a sanguine expectant of much good to be derived from its ultimate success.

In moral conduct, the Duke of Marlborough, after the early period of his youth, gave to the world an edifying and an uncommon example. Numerous as his enemies were, they could not, even with the assistance of Mrs. Manley, bring home one accusation of gross immorality to his charge, after his early, and it must be allowed for many years, happy marriage. His foes, at a loss for subjects of invective, passed on to another theme, regarding which one would gladly be silent: the charge of avarice. This is one of his failings, respecting which we would gladly say with Lord Bolingbroke, when checking a parasite who sought to please him by ridiculing the penuriousness of the Duke of Marlborough; "He was so very great a man, that I forget he had that vice."* His enemies, indeed, took care that it should not be forgotten. It became proverbial in their mouths. "I take it," says Swift, in one of his letters, "that the same grain of caution which disposeth a man to fill his

* Warton's Essay on Pope, vol. ii. p. 303.

coffers, will teach him how to preserve them at all events; and I dare hold a wager, that the Duke of Marlborough, in all his campaigns, was never known to lose his baggage."* The story of the Duke's chiding his servant for his extravagance in lighting four candles in his tent when Prince Eugene came to confer with him,† is of that species of anecdote to which no one can attach either credit or importance.

That anecdote, so generally in circulation, which describes Marlborough creeping out of a public room at Bath, with sixpence that he had gained at cards, and walking home to save the expense of a chair, we would willingly, with Lord Bolingbroke, forget. His taste, and the good sense which characterised his mind, led him, in an age of extravagance, to avoid ostentation. His table was in the old English style, which by many persons was considered too plain for his rank.‡ His attendants were few; and his dread of increasing the necessary evils of a numerous retinue appears, from some portion of the correspondence between him and Sir John Vanburgh, to have been very great. His dress was habitually simple, except on state occasions, when its

* Swift's Correspondence, vol. xv. p. 236.

† Biographia.

‡ London Chronicle, November 21, 1758.

magnificence is referred to by his contemporary, Evelyn.

With those habits of care, not to say penuriousness, which have been universally ascribed to the Duke, he joined a willingness to relieve the destitute, for whose sake he forgot, when occasion required it, the objects which would have been dearest to a selfish man.*

"This great man," John Duke of Marlborough, say the newspapers of the day, "was completely under the management of his wife, as the following story, well known in the family, evinces. The Duke had noticed the behaviour of a young officer in some engagement in Flanders, and sent him over to England with some despatches, and with a letter to the Duchess, commending him to her to procure some superior commission in the army for him. The Duchess read the letter and approved of it, but asked him where the thousand pounds were, for his increase of rank. The young man blushed and said, that really he was master of no such sum. 'Well, then,' said she, 'you may return to the Duke.' This he did very soon afterwards, and told him how he had been received by the Duchess. The Duke laughingly said, he thought

* His avarice has been attributed greatly to the Duchess's influence.

it would be so; but he should, however, do better another time; and presenting him with a thousand pounds, sent him over to England. This last expedition proved successful."

We may be assured that the petty penuriousness which was ascribed to Marlborough has at all events been greatly exaggerated,—as such errors are always magnified by report. His early narrowness of fortune produced notions of exactness, into which men of business-like habits are prone to fall; and when wealth flows in, it is not easy to discard the small practices which have crept in upon us, step by step, imperceptibly, and which originated in a virtuous principle. Marlborough, however, had one great attribute, possessing which, no man ought to be severely deprecated for penuriousness. He was just. If, unlike Turenne, he had not the greatness and disinterestedness to neglect, in his campaigns, opportunities of amassing wealth, he encroached not upon others in private life; he economised, when economy was needful to preserve him from debt; he spent freely on a large scale. It was in trifles that his "regina pecunia," as Prince Eugene called it, was his household deity. He maintained many noble establishments, and expended upon Blenheim sums which the nation refused to pay. And finally, immense as it was,

he left his wealth in the right channel. No disgraceful connexions, no propensities to gaming, nor to destructive speculations, impaired his fortune, or entailed disgrace upon his name.

CHAPTER XIII.

Funeral of the Duke of Marlborough—His bequests to the Duchess—Immediate proposals of marriage made for her in her widowhood—Character and letters of Lord Coningsby—Character of the Duke of Somerset—His Grace's offer of marriage to the Duchess.—1722.

ALL that funereal honours could add of splendour to the great hero's memory, was duly executed. His Majesty George the First, and the nation in general, how divided soever in their tributes to his name when living, were unanimous in paying such honours to it as the vulgar prize. The King himself offered to defray the expenses of the funeral, but the Duchess, with the Duke's executors and relations, declined accepting this gracious proposal.

We spare the reader the entire enumeration of those revolting details which accompany the barbarous custom of a body lying in state; the bed of black velvet, as Collins describes it with true

heraldic pleasure, "properly adorned;" the coffin, with its water-gilt nails; the suit of armour placed upon that mournful symbol, decorated with all the honours of the great defunct; a general's truncheon in the hand; the garter, the collar, the pendant George, and the now useless sword, in a rich scabbard fastened to the side. These, with the ducal coronet, the cap of a prince of the empire, the banner, the crest, were all duly examined and appreciated by the nobility and others who thronged to Marlborough-house, where this sad and absurd pageant was performed. Suites of rooms were likewise opened, and adorned with escutcheons, with ciphers and badges interspersed, all lighted by silver sconces and candlesticks, with wax tapers, prepared for the crowds who were obliged to wait, previous to penetrating into the room of death.

On the sixth of August, the solemn procession, one of the most imposing that the metropolis of England had ever witnessed, took place, Garter King-at-arms directing the whole ceremony. The coffin, with the suit of armour, as on the bed of state, lying on an open bier, was preceded by horse-guards, foot-guards, and artillery, all in military mourning, amongst whose still gorgeous array, detachments of forty riders, at intervals, in

mourning cloaks, added to the solemnity of the scene, whilst a band of out-pensioners of Chelsea Hospital, seventy-three in number, corresponding to the age of the Duke, constituted an interesting portion of the attendants. Many of these poor men doubtless remembered the great general in the day of his fame.

The Duke of Montague, as chief mourner, followed the bier, in the coach belonging to the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough; whilst the Earls of Sunderland and Godolphin, as supporters to the chief mourner, succeeded in that of the present Duchess of Marlborough. Then came eight Dukes and five Earls, amongst the former of whom was the Duke of Somerset, who at no very remote period proposed to the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough to change her illustrious name to that of Somerset. The coaches of the King and of the Prince of Wales preceded a long line of carriages in the procession, which drove along Piccadilly, and through St. James's, Pall Mall, and Charing Cross, to the west door of Westminster Abbey. The body was deposited in a vault at the foot of Henry the Seventh's tomb. Amid the sound of anthems, and the solemnities of our beautiful church service, were the remains of Marlborough lowered to the dust.

The Bishop of Rochester, Dean of Westminster,

in his cope, read, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God," &c.; and the choir sang, "I heard a voice from heaven." Then Garter King-at-arms advanced, and recalling the spectators to the vain honours of the world, enumerated the titles of the deceased, proclaiming, "Thus hath it pleased Almighty God to take out of this transitory world, into his mercy, the most high and noble prince, John Duke of Marlborough," &c. The attendant officers broke their staves of office, and delivered them to Garter, who threw them into the grave. Thus the vain ceremonials, most exacted at the period when they can least avail to elevate and honour the poor fragile dust, were terminated.

The body was afterwards removed to the mausoleum at Blenheim, erected by Rysbach, under the superintendence of the Duchess.*

And now was Sarah Duchess of Marlborough left alone, for the only relative who truly loved her was in the tomb; her grandchildren were young, and in her surviving daughters she had little or no consolation.

What were her feelings on the final separation with the partner of so many years, we can but conjecture. It is said that there were certain traits of his conduct to her that she could not,

* Collins's Baronage, vol. ii.

long after the Duke's death, recal without tears.* She had attended him sedulously, and even devotedly, during his long illness; † and that the Duke appreciated her devotedness, is obvious from a passage in one of the numerous codicils to his will.

The Duchess's personal comforts, as far as they depended on her pecuniary interests, were carefully considered in the Duke's disposal of his property. On the first arrangement of his affairs, he bequeathed to her the income of ten thousand a year, free from all taxes and charges, with the option of changing five thousand pounds a year which his grace received from the post office, for an annuity on his property, reflecting that the public grant ought to devolve on the person who should bear his title. But, some years after this bequest was made, the Duke, in the following terms, added another, to mark more forcibly his affection and gratitude to the Duchess.

"And whereas in and by my said herein-before recited will, I gave to my said wife and her assigns, during the term of her natural life, the sum of ten thousand pounds per annum, clear of taxes; and whereas my personal estate is since greatly increased, and my said wife has been very

* See Lady M. W. Montague's Letters.

† Coxe, p. 653.

tender and careful of me, and had great trouble with me during my illness; and I intending, for the consideration aforesaid, and out of the tender affection, great respect, and gratitude which I have and bear to her, and for the better increase of her title and honour, to increase her said annuity five thousand pounds a year," &c.*

The title and the honours of the dukedom of Marlborough descended upon his daughter Henrietta, Countess of Godolphin, with a reversionary entail upon the male issue of any of her sisters. The Countess's son, Lord Rialton, was to receive, in consequence, a more ample allowance than his cousins, together with various heir-looms of great value. Amongst these, the service of gold plate presented to the Duke by the Elector of Hanover, and the diamond sword given to him by the Emperor Charles, are particularly enumerated.

To the Duchess of Marlborough were left the plate and jewels belonging to the Duke. She was permitted to dispose, by will, of the estate at Sandridge, which the Duke had purchased; but was requested to leave Marlborough-house, the site of which had been granted to her by the crown, to the successor in the title. She was also appointed one of the trustees to the Duke's

* Coxe, p. 653.

will, in conjunction with his three sons-in-law, and with several gentlemen.

The Duchess was likewise entrusted with a bequest of much importance, as matters then stood. This was the sum of fifty thousand pounds to be expended in equal instalments, in five years, for the purpose of completing the palace and other works at Blenheim, under the sole control of the Duchess. Wealthy, independent, and still agreeable in her person, the Duchess had not been many months a widow before endeavours were made to induce her to change that state, and to enter once more into matrimonial life. Those who thus sought to ensnare her, were, however, but little acquainted with the Duchess's real sentiments.

The earliest, and not the least ardent suitor to her grace, was Thomas Earl of Coningsby, whose admiration of the Duchess appears to have commenced even before Marlborough was committed to the tomb. Lord Coningsby was a politician of a sort peculiarly acceptable to the Duchess; and, as was her habit with other friends, she had maintained an occasional correspondence with this active Whig peer, who had always expressed the most sincere devotion to her husband. This attachment appears to have been returned by Marlborough, who professed, in writing of

Lord Coningsby, to place considerable reliance upon his judgment; whilst Coningsby, on occasion of the Duke's leaving the kingdom in 1712, went so far as to say, that "he had now not a friend in the country."

Such were the terms on which the subsequent suitor stood with the husband of his "dearest, dearest Lady Marlborough," for so he repeatedly calls her in his letters.

Lord Coningsby, when he offered his hand and fortunes to the Duchess, did not degrade her by the addresses of a man unknown to distinction. Not only their old friendship, and a correspondence bordering all along upon the line which separates friendship from love,* but a high reputation for courage and abilities, might authorise his lordship not, at least, to expect a contumacious rejection. Early in life he had signalised himself at the battles of Aughrim and the Boyne; and, upon the latter occasion, had the honour to be near his Majesty King William the Third, when slightly wounded in the shoulder, and the good fortune to be the first to apply a handkerchief to his Majesty's hurt.†

For his services on this occasion, Coningsby was elevated by William to the peerage of Ire-

* See some curious letters in the Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 70.

† Burke's Extinct Peerage, art. Coningsby.

land; and in 1715 the honour was extended by George the First, and he was created Earl of Coningsby, with his title in remainder to his eldest daughter Margaret.

Lord Coningsby having thus graced an ancient name by well-merited distinction, acquired the confidence and good-will of his political friends by his consistency as an advocate for the Protestant succession, and by the solidity of his judgment upon all parliamentary affairs. It appears to have been the desire of Godolphin and Marlborough, frequently, to consult one who had taken an active share in the settlement of the great national question at the time of the Revolution. "Upon all parliamentary affairs," says Godolphin, writing to Marlborough in 1708, "I value very much Lord Coningsby's judgment and experience."

Lord Coningsby, at the time of Marlborough's death, having been twice married, his eldest daughter by his second marriage* was created, in her father's lifetime, Baroness and Viscountess Coningsby of Hampton Court, in the county of Hereford. Besides this favoured daughter, Lord Coningsby had four others, two of whom appear still to have been unmarried, and residing under his parental care, at the time of his lordship's singular correspondence with the Duchess of Marlborough.

* By Frances, daughter of the Earl of Ranelagh.

Scarcely four months after the death of the Duke,* we find, by a letter preserved among the Coxe Papers in the British Museum, that the Earl of Coningsby had begun his invasion upon the Duchess's new state of independence, and had commenced his siege like a skilful pioneer. He begins by expressing the most poignant apprehensions on account of her grace's health. The letter is dated London, Oct. 8, 1722.†

"When I had the honour to wait on your grace at Blenheim, it struck me to the heart to find you, the best, the worthiest, and the wisest of women, with regard to your health, and consequently your precious life, in the worst of ways.

"Servants are, at the best, very sorry trustees for anything so valuable; and that which terrified me, and which has ever since lain dreadfully heavy on my thoughts, was the coolness I imagine I observed in yours, when you lay, to my apprehension, in that dangerous condition which it was my unhappiness to see you in.

"Think, madam, what will become of those two dear children which you, with all the reasons in the world, love best, should they be (which God in heaven forbid) so unfortunate as to lose you.

"I can preach most feelingly on the subject, having been taught, from the ingratitude of the

* Oct. 8, 1722. The Duke died June 16, 1722.

† Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 70.

world, the want of true friendship in it; and, from the most unnatural falsehood of nearest relatives, how uneasy it is, upon a bed of sickness, to think of leaving helpless and beloved children to merciless and mercenary (and it is ten million to one but they prove both) trustees and guardians; and had I not trusted in God, in my late dangerous indisposition, that he would not bereave my two dearest innocents of me their affectionate father, such thoughts had killed me. But God has been merciful to me, and so I from my soul pray he may be in preserving you to them.

"I could give many more reasons for your grace's being in this place at this time; but these will prove sufficient to one so discerning," &c.

Lord Coningsby's children appear, indeed, to have been the objects of his tender solicitude; and it seems to have been his aim to have interested the heart of the Duchess in behalf of these little innocents, as he calls them; to whose newly acquired rank, doubtless, some portion of the courted lady's wealth would have been an agreeable addition. It must have been, indeed, no easy task to address in terms of passion the Duchess, whose shrewd mind would instantly dispel the colouring which was so coarsely dashed over the real purpose of the valiant lord. The Duchess, be it remembered, was now in her sixty-

second year, at which age women may be venerable, but never attractive. It would be well if our sex would learn discrimination, and remember the difference.

In November, the Earl gained courage to write a still more explicit letter to his beloved friend; and his letter contains something like an intimation that the subject of a more intimate union than that of friendship had already been broached between himself and the Duchess. The reader may judge for himself, from the following extracts, since it is difficult and dangerous to take the interpretation of love-letters entirely into one's own hands. The letter is so extremely characteristic and absurd, that since it has never before been published, we are disposed to give it almost ungarbled to the reader.

After premising that he found the innocent glee of his children his great and only solace, when returning tired, and more heartless than ever, on account of the dismal state of the country, from the House of Lords, his lordship observes— *

" Albemarle-street, Nov. 20, 1722.

" And these little innocents have been my only comforters and counsellors, and, under God, my support, from the most dismal day I was so

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 71.

unfortunate to be deprived of the most delightful conversation of my dearest, dearest Lady Marlborough, to whom alone I could open the innermost thoughts of my loaded heart; and by whose exalted wisdom, and by a friendship more sincere than is now to be met in any other breast among all the men and women in the world, I found relief from all my then prevailing apprehensions, and was sometimes put in hope that the great and Almighty Disposer of all things would, out of his infinite goodness to me, at his own time and in his own way, establish those blessings (which he then showed me but a glimpse of, and suffered me to enjoy but a moment,) to me for the term of my happy life.

" How these pleasing expectations were frightfully lessened by the ill state of health I found you in at Blenheim, I need not tell you, because you could not but see the confusion the melancholy sight put me into. And it was no small addition to my concern to see (as I imagined at least) so much indifference in the preservation of a life so precious amongst those entrusted with it; and had I not been deluded to believe that I should soon have the honour to see your grace here, I had, before I left Woodstock, sent to you to know by what safe method I might communicate to you any matter necessary for you to be

informed of, relative to my dear country, or your still dearer self.

" But I was not only disappointed of these intentions by the long progress you have made, and during which time, by inquiring every day at your door, I learnt from your porter that he knew not how to send a letter to you till you returned to St. Albans, and where, the moment I knew you were arrived, I presumed to send you the letter to which you honoured me with an answer by the post, but likewise by your letter coming in that way; and now I am altogether at a loss to tell my dear Lady Marlborough whether the pleasure that dear letter brought me, or the terrors it gave me, had the ascendant in me, and of this doubt you, and you alone, must judge.

" First, then, the pleasure was infinite to hear that your health was restored to you.

" But then the terror was unutterable when you took so much pains to let me know how little you valued a life that I thought inestimable.

" Again, the pleasure was vastly great in reading those delightful words which so fully expressed sincere Lady Marlborough's regard to me, and concern for me and my dearest children.

" But then the terror was insupportable upon me, when I found you were unalterably determined not to see this place this winter, but like-

wise your letter being sent by the post, and which was opened by the miscreants of the office, seemed to be a sort of dreadful indication to me that you designed to put an end to all future correspondence with me.

"And when I had the additional mortification of being assured that you had been in town, and at your own house, for a day and a night, and would not allow me or mine the least notice of it, which, with the dismal thoughts that it brought into my head and heart, I will for my own ease strive for ever, for ever to forget.

"Your commanding my dearest Peggy to show me the letter your most beloved writ to her will help me to this happiness, and makes me hope I shall receive an assurance, under your dearest hand, that you designed it for that purpose.

"Though I desire above all things in this world to see you for a moment, yet so much do I prize Lady Marlborough's safety above my own satisfaction, that I would not have you in this distracted place, at this dismal juncture, for any consideration under heaven. I intend, by God's permission, to leave it myself soon; but whither to go, or how to dispose of a life entirely devoted to you, I know not till I receive your orders and commands.

"But I live in hopes that the great and glo-

rious Creator of the world, who does and must direct all things, will direct you to make me the happiest man upon the face of the earth, and enable me to make my dearest, dearest Lady Marlborough, as she is the wisest and the best, the happiest of all women.

"I am, your grace knows I am, with the truest, the sincerest, and the most faithful heart,

"Your Grace's

"Most dutiful and most obedient

"Humble Servant,

"CONINGSBY.

"There is no such cattle or sheep as your grace desires, to be had till July next."

Such were the terms in which the devoted Lord, devoted certainly to some fascinating object personified in her form as its representative, addressed the venerable Duchess. Her reply, most unfortunately, is not preserved; and with this remarkable letter the correspondence, as far as we can glean, closes. Dr. Coxe, whilst with tantalising brevity he has described Lord Coningsby's letters as "the rapturous effusions of a love-sick swain," has not deemed it important, nor perhaps correct, to leave us any further details of these singular addresses, which so grave an

historian, as he who has commemorated the fortunes of John Duke of Marlborough, has considered as impertinent in so serious a narrative.

Lord Coningsby did not long survive his disappointment. He died in 1729; and his daughter, Lady Coningsby, leaving no issue, the title, in 1761, became extinct.

The Duchess was, at the time of the Duke's death, sixty-two years of age. Her health appears to have been still unbroken; her beauty far less impaired than that of many much younger women. Her income was more than ample, since she found means, even when maintaining a princely establishment, to accumulate sums, and to purchase lands, which she left to her grandchildren. Her wit, her experience, her consequence in society as the widow of Marlborough, all contributed to give her a proud distinction in that gay world to which she was devoted.

After the Duke's decease she resided principally at Windsor Lodge, employing herself chiefly in the management of the affairs which had devolved upon her, and in the superintendence of those cares which she had bound herself to bestow upon her grandchildren. But there were those who thought that Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, her wealth, or her former influence, might add dignity even

to those already exalted in their own estimation above the majority of their fellow-creatures.*

Charles, sixth Duke of Somerset, at this time a widower, proposed, within a year or little more after the death of the Duke of Marlborough, to the Duchess to unite herself to him. He pleaded even a long and respectful passion, and addressed her grace with a humility which only the fashion of those times could have extracted from one who bore the appellation of the "proud Duke."

This nobleman had long been acquainted with the widowed Duchess of Marlborough. In former days, before the Duchess of Somerset had supplanted the proud Sarah in the affections of Queen Anne, the Duchess of Marlborough appears to have occasionally employed her talents and address in soothing the offended pride of the Duke of Somerset, whom it was necessary for the Whig party to conciliate.† Lord Godolphin, however, could not be brought to enter into the Duke's scheme "of being a great man at court."‡ For the "proud Duke" did no injustice to the quality

* Coxe.

† Private Correspondence, p. 206. Letter from Mr. Maynwaring to the Duchess.

‡ Ibid. See also Horace Walpole's Letters.

of his intellect by the absurd state, and wearisome self-importance which he affected, even to the annihilation of natural feelings. He was a man of no talent, but of unbounded pretensions. Mr. Maynwaring justly observes, in writing to the Duchess, speaking of the Duke's desire to exalt his importance as a party man, "For a man that has no talents to do any one thing in the world, to think that he is to do everything, and to have all preferments pass through his hands, is something so much out of the way, that it is hard to find a name for it."

The Duchess of Marlborough had, in former days, thoroughly understood, and as thoroughly despised, the shallowness of his grace of Somerset's understanding, and the unbounded arrogance of his pretensions. The Duke was one of those beings, of whom a simple delineation in works of fiction would be called exaggeration. Holding his exalted station by a disputed right,* he took precedence in his degree, in consequence of the first Duke of the nation being a Catholic. This pre-eminence, hazardous to one of limited capacity, was maintained by the Duke almost in a regal style. He intimated his commands to his servants by signs, not vouchsafing to speak to

* Burke's Peerage, art. Somerset.

them. When he travelled, the roads were cleared of all obstruction, and of idle bystanders. His children never sat down in his presence; it was even his custom, when he slept in the afternoon, to insist upon one of his daughters standing on each side of him during his slumber. On one occasion, Lady Charlotte Seymour, being tired, ventured to sit down, and he left her, in consequence, twenty thousand pounds less than her sister. He gave precedence to no one but the Duke of Norfolk.

Notwithstanding these absurdities, the Duke possessed some fine qualities. His pride was accompanied by a sense of honour, and his conversation graced by a nobleness of sentiment, which, in spite of a hesitation in his speech, must have well become a man who aimed at so much. He was a firm and generous friend; patronised the fine arts, and, what was perhaps of some importance to a widower disposed to marry again, possessed a fine exterior. At the time when he made proposals to the Duchess of Marlborough, he had, however, passed his prime, and was sixty-five years of age. Already had he linked himself to one of the noblest families in the land by his marriage with his first Duchess, the Lady Elizabeth Percy, the heiress of the Percys, and the widow successively of two husbands, Lord Ogle, and Thomas

Thynne, Esq., the last of whom was shot in his coach by Count Coningsmark, in hopes of carrying off the heiress of the Percys. This Duchess of Somerset had been on apparently friendly, but actually, scarcely on good terms with the Duchess of Marlborough, who perceived, through the veil of courtesy and submissive sweetness, the ambitious designs of the "great lady," as Swift termed her. She fixed her eyes, as the Duchess discovered, upon the place of groom of the stole, an office which proved a temptation to many; "but covered the impertinence of her ambition and expectation within, with the outward guise of lowliness and good humour."* Such was the Duchess of Marlborough's opinion of the Duke's first wife; and when she further discovered that the Duches of Somerset was secretly undermining her at the very time that she pretended to lament the misunderstandings between her and the Queen, it is not to be supposed that the pretended good will which was still maintained, was anything but a very hollow alliance.

To the Duke, however, the Duchess of Marlborough's conduct had been friendly. She gave him timely notice, through the Duchess, of a resolution of a "certain great man," probably

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 147.

Harley, to dismiss the Duke from the post of master of the horse, for telling cabinet council secrets. Eventually the Duke was dissatisfied with the conduct of the Queen, and retired from court, but his Duchess remained, to gain unbounded ascendency over the weak Queen's mind, and to continue her attendance on her, until her demise.

Notwithstanding the difference of their political career, the Duke of Somerset never forgot that his first Duchess was a Percy, and, as such, entitled to devotion and respect. Possibly he thought that he could alone pay her a suitable compliment in soliciting the Duchess of Marlborough to succeed her, and to console him for the loss of his first Duchess.* But she to whom he addressed himself answered his proposal in a manner worthy of her superior understanding, becoming her years, and admirable as addressed to the "proud Duke." She declined a second marriage as unsuitable to her age; but added, that were she addressed by the emperor of the world, she would not permit him to succeed in that heart which had been devoted to John Duke of Marlborough.†

The Duke received this refusal with submis-

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 147.

† Coxe, p. 656.

sion, and even consulted the Duchess respecting the choice of a wife. At her grace's recommendation, he married the Lady Charlotte Finch, second daughter of Daniel Earl of Nottingham and Winchilsea.* The Duke, it is said, never forgot the distinction between a Percy and a Finch. "The Duchess," says Granger, "once tapped him familiarly on the shoulder with her fan; he turned round, and with an indignant countenance said, "My first Duchess was a Percy, and she never took such a liberty." Whatever had been the early opinion entertained of the Duke by the Duchess of Marlborough, she became, in the latter part of her life, extremely friendly towards this absurd nobleman of the old school, and consulted him frequently on the management of her affairs.†

The Duchess, notwithstanding such temptations to her resolution, formed no second marriage. The Duke of Somerset survived her grace, and lived to attend the funeral of George the Second, as he had done that of Charles the Second, James the Second, Queen Mary and William the Third, of Anne, and of George the First. The long period of twenty-two years, during which the Duchess of Marlborough survived her

* Coxe. † Ibid.

husband, if they proved less eventful than her youth and middle age, are not wholly devoid of interest, when considered in conjunction with the eminent characters who figured at the same era.

CHAPTER XIV.

Anecdotes of the Duchess of Marlborough and the Duchess of Buckingham—Pope's "Atossa"—Sir Robert Walpole—The Duchess's enmity towards that minister—Singular scene between them—The Duchess's causes of complaint enumerated.

EXTRAORDINARY as the displays of violent passion in the Duchess of Marlborough may appear in modern days, when every exhibition of natural feeling, whether good or bad, is carefully suppressed by the customs of society, there were not wanting, in her own sphere, ladies of high rank, equally arrogant though less gifted, between whom common report hesitated on which to bestow the distinction of being the most absurd, outrageous, and repulsive.

Among those ladies who, in the reigns of George the First and George the Second, formed a link with the times of the Stuarts, was the Duchess of Buckingham, natural daughter of James the Second by Catherine Sedley, Countess

of Dorchester—a parentage of which the Duchess was shamelessly proud. Possessing the arrogance of her contemporary Duchess, without her masculine sense, and exhibiting equally a love of display, pertinacity, and violence of temper, the Duchess of Buckingham laboured with unceasing pains to procure the restoration of her half-brother, the Pretender. She frequently travelled to the Continent in hopes of furthering that end; she stopped ever with filial devotion at the tomb of James, shedding tears over the threadbare pall which covered his remains; but her filial duty extended not to replace it by a newer and more sumptuous decoration.

These two Duchesses both possessed, from the same cause, some influence in the sphere of politics. Around them gathered the malcontents of the two parties: both were in enmity to the court—both detested Sir Robert Walpole. Tories and Jacobites thronged the saloons of the Duchess of Buckingham; the malcontent Whigs, those of Marlborough-house. The anecdotes related by Horace Walpole must always be adopted with much caution. He states that the Duchess of Buckingham, passionately attached to shows and pageants, made a funeral for her husband as splendid as that of Marlborough. She wished afterwards to borrow for the proces-

sion at her son's interment the car which conveyed the remains of Marlborough to the tomb. "It carried my Lord Marlborough," was the Duchess of Marlborough's angry reply, "and it shall never carry any other." "I have consulted the undertaker," retorted the Duchess of Buckingham, "and he tells me I may have the same for twenty pounds." The same authority informs us, that when the illegitimate daughter of James the Second received Lord Hervey as a suitor to her granddaughter, she appointed the day of her royal grandfather's martyrdom for the first interview, and appeared, when he entered, seated in a chair of state, of deep mourning, in weeds and weepers, with her attendants in similar suits.*

Her rival Duchess, Sarah of Marlborough, suffered from the satirical castigation of Pope, in one of those epistles which Bolingbroke pronounced to be his best.† The famous and certainly in their way unequalled lines on Atossa were shown to the Duchess of Marlborough, as if they were designed for her grace of Buckingham. But the shrewd Sarah knew the faithful, though highly-coloured portrait. She checked the person who was reading to her, and called out aloud, "I see what you mean; I cannot be so imposed

* H. Walpole's Reminiscences. † Warton on Pope.

upon." She abused Pope violently, but was afterwards reconciled to the great satirist, and is said to have given him a thousand pounds to suppress the character.* Such is the statement; but it would have been more like the Duchess to have braved the world, and to have permitted the inimitable satire to see the light. She could scarcely be rendered more unpopular than she had hitherto been.

The death of George the First produced no change in the station held as first Lord of the Treasury by Sir Robert Walpole; a minister who seems to have been, as a man, peculiarly obnoxious to the Duchess of Marlborough, and with whom she was, at various periods of her life, at variance.

Since the death of Lord Sunderland, Sir Robert Walpole had been making rapid advances to the office of prime minister. He resumed that office, on the accession of George the Second, with an accumulated national debt amounting to fifty millions.† Although coinciding with Sir Robert in what she termed her Whig principles, the Duchess could never assimilate with a character so unlike the statesmen whom she had known and revered; so opposite in his nature to the disinterested Godolphin, whom she had seen placed upon a similar eminence, and whose

* Warton on Pope, p. 141. † Macauley.

fidelity and honour she constantly extols. Even the popular qualities of this noted minister were repulsive to her aristocratic notions; and with the Duchess prejudice was ever more powerful than reason. Sir Robert was, in her estimation, one of "the worst bred men she ever saw;" and coarse as the Duchess has been represented, no one had more insight into character, nor had greater experience of those manners which charm the fancy and elevate the tone of social life. Sir Robert Walpole's most popular qualities were beneath her praise. His good-nature she might admire, but it was accompanied by freedom of manners, vulgarity of language, and profligacy in conduct. The dignity of station was never understood by him. He had neither elevation of mind to compass great designs, nor depravity to conceive schemes of wickedness. Yet he injured virtue daily, by ridiculing that nice sense of her perfection which we call honour. "When he found," says Lord Chesterfield, "anybody proof against pecuniary temptations—which was, alas! but seldom—he laughed at and ridiculed all notions of public virtue, and the love of one's country, calling them the chimerical schoolboy flights of classical learning, declaring himself, at the same time, no saint, no Spartan, no reformer."* His demeanour thoroughly corre-

* Chesterfield's Characters.

sponded with these professions. Of very moderate acquirements, he entertained no value for the higher branches of literature, a knowledge of which might have redeemed his common-place mind from vulgarity. Higher tastes might have rendered that flattery revolting, in which he found such delight, that no society in which it was enjoyed could be too low, no characters too reprobate for this minister's familiar intercourse, whilst they administered to his vanity. With assumed openness of manners, he kept, nevertheless, a careful guard over his real sentiments, whilst he possessed, beyond every other man, the art of diving into those of others. He lowered the attributes of ministerial power, by converting the degeneracy of the times to his own advantage, by his connexion with the monied interests and with stock-jobbing, the only science to which he seems to have applied his mind. His corrupt administration must ever be remembered with disgust by those who wish to see the national character continue on the high footing which it has generally, with some melancholy interruptions, preserved.*

The Duchess of Marlborough, be it however remembered, could endure the freedom and ill-breeding of Sir Robert Walpole until personal

* Chesterfield, Smollett, Tindal, &c.

wrongs roused her resentments. Sir Robert owed to her, if we may believe her uncontradicted statement, the appointment of treasurer to the navy, which she procured for him, not much to her credit, since he had at that time been expelled the House of Commons for peculation.* She prevailed with difficulty in his behalf, and received acknowledgments from Sir Robert for this service. "Notwithstanding which," she adds, "at the beginning of his great power with the present family, he used me with all the insolence and folly upon every occasion, as he has treated several, since he has acted as if he were king, which it would be tedious to relate." †

The "folly" of which the Duchess complains might be a trait of Walpole's habitual manners; from the "insolence" which she attributes to him he was generally free, except when irritated beyond endurance in the House of Commons. No man was more liked and less respected. His disposition was not vindictive. His raillery proceeded from a kindly temper, of which refinement formed no feature. His conduct in the domestic relations of life has been greatly extolled, but surely by those who have forgotten his licentiousness of

* See Macauley, p. 225.

† Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 161.

character, which tainted his conjugal life, and the impure example which he gave to his children.

It was about a year before the death of George the First that the Duchess and Sir Robert Walpole came to an open rupture. Her influence, and the obligations which he had acknowledged to her grace, had hitherto delayed the hostilities which now commenced.

The Duchess, it appears from the Private Correspondence lately published, had lent the government a very considerable sum of money for several years, on which account Sir Robert Walpole was particularly desirous, as he told her grace's friend, Dr. Hare, to serve and oblige the Duchess.* Upon this, and other matters, a variance having arisen between the Duchess and Sir Robert, Dr. Hare, afterwards Bishop of Chichester, who appears to have been really attached to the Duchess, and to have had more influence over her than any one else, perceiving a great degree of bitterness and resentment to have been excited in her grace's mind, addressed her by letter on the subject. This excellent man availed himself of the best privilege of friendship, that of speaking the truth. He did not disguise from her grace that he perceived and lamented the

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 152.

violence of her passions; but he began his mild and just remonstrances by an appeal to her best feelings. "I hope and believe, madam, that I need not tell your grace that I have the most affectionate esteem for you, and not only esteem, but really admire you for your fine understanding and good sense, and for the just and noble sentiments which you express on all occasions in the best language, and in the most agreeable manner, so that one cannot hear you without the greatest pleasure; but the more I esteem and admire what is excellent in your grace, the more concerned am I to see any blemishes in so great a character."

Dr. Hare understood well the person to whom he addressed his well-meant remarks. "Ill-grounded suspicions," he observes, "violent passions, and a boundless liberty of expressing resentments without distinction from the prince downwards, and that in the most public manner, and before servants, are certainly blemishes, and not only so, but attended with great inconveniences; they lessen exceedingly the influence and interests persons of your grace's fortune and endowments would otherwise have, and unavoidably create enemies."*

The Duchess's reply to this admirable advice

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 495.

was worthy of a disposition candid and upright beyond dispute. Far from resenting Dr. Hare's good counsels, she declared herself of Montaigne's opinion, that a greater proof of friendship could not be given than in venturing to disoblige a friend in order to serve him. She entreated Dr. Hare to believe that she regarded him the more for his sincerity. "I beg of you," she added, in her own natural way, "never to have the least scruple in telling me anything you think, for I am not so partial to myself as not to know that I have many imperfections, but a great fault I never will have, that I know to be one." Having thus premised, she proceeded to explain how affairs stood between herself and Sir Robert Walpole, and to justify herself in Dr. Hare's opinion.

The Duchess had not, as she declared, sought an interview with Sir Robert, but Sir Robert had sent to speak to her. She found it was the old subject, the trust-money, and she listened to him patiently. Sir Robert wanted to borrow two hundred thousand pounds, which he owned would be of great service to him. But when he pretended that he requested this loan from the Duchess and her family in preference to others, for their advantage, the high-spirited lady was not to be deceived. Her anger rose at the at-

tempt to delude her. Lord Godolphin, her son-in-law, had lost by lending to Sir Robert at such low interest, and the Duchess was aware how "impossible it was for Sir Robert to have the appearance of sinking the public debt, if she had not consented to lend him the trust-money." *

It is scarcely necessary to recal to the reader's recollection, that before this period the formation of the sinking fund had taken place; and, as of this treasure the nation was to be relieved from the national debt, members of both houses were solicitous individually to raise large sums upon the people, not only on account of the credit they acquired by aiding a scheme then popular, but also because they exacted from government a large share of the dividend.†

The Duchess despised and distrusted Sir Robert Walpole; and his anxiety to obtain the sum, and his duplicity in pretending that it was for the advantage of those for whom the Duchess held the money in trust that his disinterested advice proceeded, irritated his shrewd, and irritable, and experienced listener; and after much formality and great coldness, a warm explanation between Sir Robert and the Duchess took place.

* Private Correspondence, p. 495.

† Macaulay, p. 370.

The interview might have ended with the ceremony in which it began, but for one expression of the minister, namely, "that he should be always ready to serve her." This was the first time, since he had been a great man, that Sir Robert had offended the Duchess by such condescension, and it produced, what possibly he desired, a scornful enumeration of all the favours which the Duchess had ever required from him, and of the manner in which those demands had been received. Sir Robert laughed—laughed either with anger or contempt, the Duchess knew not which; but she knew that his laugh was expressive of one or other of those passions. However, he would not allow that her grace had anything to complain of; and said that she had enumerated trifles, and provoked, of course, a burst of invective. "Great men," retorted the Duchess, "seldom heard the truth, because those who spoke to them generally wanted their favour; and when anybody told them the truth, they always thought that person mad. Whenever," added the Duchess, "Sir Robert should wish to hear the truth, she should be happy to see him again; that she had now vented her anger, and she could talk to him easily on other subjects." Sir Robert proved to be patience itself; he had a little more discourse with his fiery friend; they parted civilly, and

she lent him the money he desired, not so much in accordance with her own opinion, but in compliance with the desire of her grandson, Lord Godolphin, for whom she held it in trust, as the future Duke of Marlborough, and who particularly wished that it should be so applied.

Eventually the Duchess extremely regretted that she had been enticed into this compliance; and felt, perhaps, as enraged that Sir Robert had outwitted her, as she was vexed that her heir should lose, as he actually did, by so appropriating the sum; for Sir Robert, far from being grateful to the Duchess, gave Lord Godolphin a lower interest than he had done before, and saved the public money for once at the expense of a friend. With the ready wit of an unprincipled man, he played the Bank off against Godolphin, and Godolphin against the Bank. When his lordship demurred, and stipulated, through his grandmother, it may be presumed, for a larger interest, Sir Robert told him, if he hesitated, he could have the money from the Bank. When the governors of the Bank of England (established 1693) held back from granting the loan, demanding a higher rate of interest, the minister assured them he could have the money from Lord Godolphin.* Certainly one cannot pity the Duchess, nor any in-

* Private Correspondence, p. 461.

dividual who, comprehending, as she undoubtedly did, the character of the minister with whom she dealt, could have any transactions with such a man. We must compassionate a dupe; but that title cannot be applied to one equally wary with the ensnarer, and conscious that he with whom she negociated possessed not one honourable sentiment, nor was capable of a single hour of remorse.

The "trifles" of which the Duchess also complained to Sir Robert, were trifles indeed; but they were such affairs as generally move the minds of women in no ordinary degree. It is observed, that women are much more tenacious of their rights than men; those who have fortunes, generally take better care of it than men, under the same circumstances, would employ. It is seldom that, amid the changes and chances of the world, one hears of a single lady of good fortune being ruined by her own extravagance; and it is remarkable that widows, from the habit of self-dependence, often become more careful after the decease of their husbands, than before they were left to move alone in society. Hence the opinion given by Dr. Johnson, that women of fortune, being accustomed to the management of money, are usually more exact, even to penuriousness,

than those whose means are either very moderate, or who have no means at all to depend upon.

The Duchess of Marlborough defended her rights, and guarded her possessions, with the undaunted demeanour of an imperious, managing, clever woman. She generally had reason, and sometimes law, on her side. Litigation was not disagreeable to her.

One of the complaints which she addressed to Sir Robert was, that an attempt was made to compel her to pay taxes upon her house in Windsor Park, and that the officers were perpetually threatening to seize her goods, which she believed could not be done, as the lodge stood in the old park. Sir Robert had suggested her applying to the Treasury to be repaid such charges, and had complained of her not submitting to do business in the usual mode. But the Duchess resisted, and gained her point. "I make," she writes to Dr. Hare, "no advantage of the park, but to eat sometimes a few little Welsh runts, and I have no more cows than I allow the underkeepers, which are to each six, but I have laid out a good deal of money, which is called being a great tenant, and I never was so mean as to bring any bills, like *other* great *men* on such oc-

casions, for what I did for my own satisfaction."* Subsequently the matter was settled by a proposal of her grace, which was accepted; this was, "that she should deposit such a sum of money as should be thought reasonable, in proper hands, for the benefit of the poor of the parish," and so be exempted from all further claims for taxes. †

The more important of the "trifles" with which Sir Robert taunted the Duchess, is yet to be described. The Duchess of Buckingham, or, as the Duchess of Marlborough significantly calls her, "the Duke of Buckingham's widow," assumed and maintained the privilege of driving through St. James's Park whenever and however she liked, whilst the Duke of Marlborough's widow was prohibited even "from taking the air for her health," though allowed, in former reigns, to drive through that privileged enclosure. This refusal, which the Duke of Marlborough's widow traced, as she thought, to Walpole, was the more unjust, as the arrogant daughter of Catherine Sedley had written a very impertinent letter to the King, and ought to have been forbidden the park. The Princess of

* Private Correspoudence, p. 465.

† Letter from Lord Godolphin to the Duchess. Private Correspondence, p. 479.

Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline, had proffered a request on the part of the Duchess of Marlborough to the King, and it had been refused. It was therefore urged by Sir Robert, that the Princess would be offended, if the boon were subsequently granted to another applicant.* How the matter ended, it does not appear; nor at what period Marlborough's widow was enabled to pass Buckingham's widow in her airings along the stately promenades.

Such were some of the altercations which disturbed the Duchess in her widowhood. She was likewise generally on indifferent terms with the court. Queen Caroline, though much commended by the Duchess as Princess of Wales, became, in process of time, everything that was disagreeable in the eyes of the Duchess; and as her grace "could not deny herself the pleasure of speaking her mind upon any occasion," to use her own words, and as there are always a number of people who trade in retail upon the speeches of others, Queen Caroline, that pattern of prudence and forbearance, and her very uninteresting consort, were soon aware of the animosity, for to that it at last amounted, that the Duchess bore to them, and to their court and administration.

* Private Correspondence, p. 467.

For this dislike there was, it must be allowed, considerable reason on the part of the Duchess; and in her letters to Mr. Scrope, secretary to the minister, Mr. Pelham, she unfolds her wrongs, and reflects great discredit on the character of the Princess.

Years afterwards, when the Duchess was so aged and infirm that she had forgotten the dates of the occurrence, she thus writes to her polite correspondent, Mr. Scrope.

"You have not," she says, "forgot the time that his Majesty's name was made use of to pay no more six hundred pounds a year: this was done by Queen Caroline, who sent me word, if I would not let her buy something of mine at Wimbledon, that would have been a great prejudice to my family, and that was settled upon them, I was in her power, and she would take away what I had for Windsor Lodge."

This threat, equally ungracious and fruitless, roused all the Duchess's spirit of resistance. In the first place she did not believe that the Queen had the power to do what she threatened, or if she had, she would, as she declared, have valued a smaller thing of her own much more than one which depended on the crown; and she sent her Majesty a respectful refusal.*

* Coxe MSS. vol. xliii. p. 123.

The affairs of Windsor Park occupied much of her time. As ranger, she could not but lament, as well as remonstrate against, the pitiful economy, if such a word can be applied to Walpole, or the shameful neglect of that source of pride to our country which was permitted during his administration. She wrote, perhaps, as much for the purpose of annoying Sir Robert, as of getting repairs done to the park; and, as her custom was, as she said, "to tumble out the truth just as it came out of her head," her manner of stating her opinion was not the most gracious that could be adopted. *

Another object of the Duchess's wrath and aversion was Charles, second Duke of St. Albans, who had been constituted, in 1730, governor of Windsor Castle, and warden of Windsor Forest.† This nobleman was not the greater favourite with the Duchess, from his being one of the lords of the bedchamber at that time. He had the misfortune to come into very frequent contact with her grace, in the discharge of his duties in Windsor Park. No one is so offended by a vain show as the ostentatious; it seems to harrow up all the pride in their nature. The Duchess was outrageous when she saw the Duke

* Private Correspondence, p. 472, 473.

† Burke's Peerage.

of St. Albans coming into the park with coaches and chaises whenever he pleased, under pretence of supervising the fortifications, a term which she thought very ridiculous, unless he meant by it "the ditch around the Castle." No one, except the royal family, or the ranger, had ever been allowed, during her experience of fifty years, such a liberty before. But that was not all the offence. The Duchess, in addressing her complaints to Pelham Holles, Duke of Newcastle, who had married her granddaughter, Lady Harriot Godolphin, assured his grace that the Duke of St. Albans had, to use a military phrase, "besieged her in both parks, and been willing to forage in them at pleasure." Having got the better of him in some points, he had pursued her to the little park; and her only resource was to address her relative, then secretary of state, to intercede with the Queen that the intrusive warden might not be permitted to have a key. Which of the belligerent powers prevailed, does not appear.

Such were some of the Duchess of Marlborough's annoyances, perhaps to her spirit occupations only, in what may be called her official life. In the next chapter we shall discuss the subject of her domestic and family troubles, after the Duke had left her the charge of numerous

and important concerns; in discharging the care of which, the government of her own temper was one of the most difficult and most material points.

CHAPTER XV.

State of the Duchess of Marlborough with respect to her family—Henrietta Duchess of Marlborough—Lord Godolphin—Pelham Holles Duke of Newcastle—The Spencer family—Charles Duke of Marlborough—His extravagance—John Spencer's anecdotes of the Miss Trevors—Letter to Mr. Scrope—Lawsuit.

It was not the happy lot of the Duchess of Marlborough to assemble around her, in the decline of life, children and grandchildren, affectionately attached to her, who would seek to soothe her mortifications, and to repair the losses which she had sustained in the early death of their brother and sisters, and in the still severer calamity with which she had since been visited. A woman who is not beloved by her own children can have very little claim to the affection of others. The fault must originate in herself, however odious the consequences appear in those, who, if they could not bestow upon her the filial love which

her temper had blighted, ought never to have omitted that filial duty which no differences ought to destroy.

Henrietta Countess of Godolphin, who now, by an act of parliament passed in 1706, succeeded to the title as Duchess of Marlborough, was long at variance with her mother, and, according to some accounts, was never reconciled.* She was beautiful, it is said, but in her disposition her parents appear to have found but little comfort. The Duchess survived this daughter, who died in 1733. Her son, Francis Earl of Godolphin, appears, from the letters lately published, to have been an especial favourite of his grandmother. She complains, indeed, of "his not being so warm in some things as he should be," (possibly in her quarrels,) but commends his truth and goodness, and declares she never forgot anything that his lordship said to her. By Dr. Hare, also, Lord Godolphin is described as one of the most reasonable and dispassionate creatures in the world. But this amiable character, unhappily for the mother and grandmother, whose asperities he might have softened, was, like most of the promising members of this ill-fated family, removed at an early age: he died in 1731, two years be-

* Horace Walpole, Reminiscences.

fore his mother, Henrietta Duchess of Marlborough.

One daughter of the Godolphin branch of the Marlborough family remained. This was Harriott, married, as we have seen, in 1717, to the extolled and favourite minister, Pelham Holles, Duke of Newcastle, one of the most liberal statesmen of those venal days. To his grace the Duchess had, as we have already seen, addressed her complaints of the Duke of St. Albans, and his siege in Windsor Park; and she could not have bespoken the interest of any one more able to promote her wishes. The Duke had been a steady promoter of the Hanoverian interests. Consistency in those days was uncommon, and he was rewarded with honours and places innumerable; yet, far from enriching himself by his public services, or by no services at all, according to the mode then in fashion, the Duke retired from his posts, according to Lord Chesterfield, at least four hundred thousand pounds poorer than when he began life; at any rate, with an income greatly reduced.*

The character of this amiable, and, in some respects, high-minded nobleman, which gained, it may be presumed, upon her grace's affections, after

* Chesterfield. Annual Register. Collins' Baronage.

she had with much pains and anxiety achieved that connexion which has been alluded to,—has been ably, but perhaps unfairly, drawn by his relation and contemporary, Lord Chesterfield. Satire was not only the natural propensity of Lord Chesterfield's mind, but the delight and practice of the day. The pungent remarks of Horace Walpole, as well as those of Chesterfield, must be taken with reservation. Neither friend nor foe was to be spared, when a sentence could be better turned, or a witticism improved, by a little delicate chastisement, all done in perfect good-humour, and with unspeakable good-breeding, by these not dissimilar characters.

Lord Chesterfield depicts in the Duke of Newcastle an obsequious, industrious, and timorous man, whom the public put below his level, in not allowing him even mediocre talents, which Chesterfield graciously assigns to him; a minister who delighted in the insignia of office; in the hurry, and in the importance which that hurry gives, of business; as one jealous of power, and eager for display. "His levées," says the Earl, "were his pleasure and his triumph;" and, after keeping people waiting for hours, when he came into his levée-room, "he accosted, hugged, embraced, and promised everybody with a seeming cordiality, but at the same time with an illiberal

and degrading familiarity."* The world, however, forgot these weaknesses, in the generosity, the romantic sense of honour, and the private virtues of this respectable nobleman.

Anne Countess of Sunderland, the second daughter of the Duchess, left four sons and one daughter, with a paternal estate greatly impoverished. It was, amongst all his faults, a redeeming point in Lord Sunderland's character, that his patriotism aimed not at gain. We have already referred to a fact not to be forgotten: when, on being dismissed from the ministry in Queen's Anne's reign, he was offered a pension, he nobly refused it, with the reply, that "since he was no longer allowed to serve his country, he was resolved not to pillage it."† His children were, however, amply provided for by the will of their grandfather. The eldest son, Robert Earl of Sunderland, the object of his mother's peculiar solicitude on her deathbed, perhaps from being more able to comprehend the characters of both of these distinguished parents before he lost them, displayed symptoms of the same aspiring mind that his father possessed. The aversion which George the Second had imbibed towards his father, prevented the spirited youth

* Chesterfield's Characters.

† Note in Chesterfield's Characters, p. 50.

from obtaining any employment. At last, in despair, and wishing to bring himself before the notice of men in power, the Earl entreated Sir Robert Walpole to give him an ensigncy in the guards. The minister was astonished at this humble request from the grandson of Marlborough, and inquired the reason. "It is because," answered the young man, "I wish to ascertain whether it is determined that I shall never have anything."* He died early in 1729,† and the Duchess appears, from a letter addressed to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, to have very deeply lamented the loss of this scion of the only branch she could "ever receive any comfort from in her own family." On this occasion the poor Duchess remarks, "that she believes, having gone through so many misfortunes with unimpaired health, nothing now but distempers and physicians could kill her."‡ She is said to have, indeed, loved Lord Sunderland above every other tie spared to her by death.

Two sons and a daughter now remained of this beloved stock. Charles, who succeeded his brother Robert, and became afterwards Duke of Marlborough, was never, according to Horace Walpole, a favourite of his grandmother, although

* Lord Wharncliffe, vol. i. p. 2. † Ibid.

‡ Collins's Baronage.

he possessed many good qualities. He was not, however, endowed with the family attribute of economy; neither could he brook the control of one, who expected, probably, far more obedience from her grandchildren than young persons are generally disposed to yield from any motive but affection. Unhappily, the Duke's sister, Lady Anne Bateman, whom the Duchess had, in compliance with her mother's wishes, brought up, was but ill disposed to soothe those differences which often arose between her grandmother and the young Duke. She introduced her brother, unhappily for his morals, to Henry Fox, first Lord Holland, one of those unprincipled, but agreeable men, whose conversation soon banishes all thirst for honour, and sense of shame. By Fox, a Jacobite at heart, but an interested partisan of Sir Robert Walpole, the young Duke was won over to the court party; upon which occasion was uttered the Duchess's sarcasm, "that is the Fox that has won over my goose;" a remark which, like every thing that she said, was industriously circulated. Fox considered public virtue in the light of a pretext in some, as an infatuation in others: self-interest was, in him, the all-prevailing principle;* Sir Robert Walpole being, in that respect, his model.

* Chesterfield.

Lady Anne Bateman, intriguing and high-spirited, exercised over her brother an ascendency which was shared by the "Fox." Influenced by dislike to her grandmother, she introduced the Duke into the family of Lord Trevor, one of whose daughters he married. The Duchess had a peculiar antipathy to Lord Trevor, who had been an enemy of her husband, and with her usual violence she banished the Duke from Windsor Lodge, and then, in derision of the new Duchess, who had, she alleged, stripped the house and garden, she set up eight figures, to personate the eight Misses Trevor, cousins of the young Duchess, representing them, in a puppet-show, as tearing up the shrubs, whilst the Duchess was portrayed carrying away a hen-coop under her arm. This anecdote originates with Horace Walpole, and, from its source, it must be regarded with caution: there are other exhibitions of passion in this extraordinary woman, which rest upon better authority.

The Duchess never forgave Lady Anne Bateman; and whilst we acknowledge the wickedness of that vindictive spirit, it must be owned that the Duchess had much provocation from this grandchild. In addition to the ingratitude of Lady Anne, she had the vexation, when Lord Charles

succeeded to the Marlborough estates, to see him and his younger brother, Lord John, squander away their patrimonial property, and vie with each other in every wild and mad frolic. At length their complicated quarrels ended in what was professedly an amicable lawsuit between the heir and his grandmother, for the settlement of some disputed portion of the property. To the amusement of the world, and certainly *not* to the annoyance of those of her relatives who rejoiced in exposing her eccentricities, the Duchess, who was capable of any act of effrontery, appeared in court to plead her own cause. The diamond-hilted sword, given by the Emperor Charles to the great Marlborough, was claimed by Lord Sunderland. "What!" exclaimed the Duchess, indignantly, "shall I suffer *that* sword, which *my* lord would have carried to the gates of Paris, to be sent to a pawnbroker's, to have the diamonds picked out one by one?" * Harsh and revolting as this exhibition of passion was, her prognostic was somewhat verified in the career of Charles Duke of Marlborough. His life presents a history of embarrassments, which, as the Duchess truly asserted, nothing but prudence on his own part could have prevented. To her correspondent, Mr. Scrope, for whom she appears to

* Lady M. W. Montague.

have imbibed a sincere regard, she unfolds all her troubles respecting her grandson in the subjoined paragraph. The tenor of the letter from which this passage is taken, places the Duchess's character, as a grandmother, in a very different light from that in which the popular writers of her day have chosen to place it. The world, judging, as it often does, most erroneously when it takes up family quarrels, had condemned the Duchess as hard-hearted and relentless. The following simple statement of facts is calculated to mitigate that sentence.*

"When I saw you (Mr. Scrope) last, you said something concerning the Duke of Marlborough, which occasions you this trouble, for you seemed to have a good opinion of him, and to wish that I would make him easy. This is to show you, that as to the good qualities you imagine he has, you are mistaken, and that it is impossible to make him easy. I will now give you the account of what has happened not long since.

"When he quitted all his employments, he wrote me a very good letter, saying that he had heard I liked he had done it; there are ex-

* This letter is given literally as it is written, without any alteration of grammar or punctuation.—Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 148.

pressions in this letter full as strong and obliging to me as those in this, dated from Althorpe, October 26th, 1733. I answered this civilly, saying, that as his behaviour to me had been so extraordinary for many years, I thought it necessary to have a year or two's experience how he would perform his great promises, and that I wished him very well. This was giving him hopes, though with the caution of a lawyer. Soon after this he treated with a Jew to take up a great sum of money. He wanted my assistance to help in the security, for Lamb has secured all in his power, and would not lessen his own securities on any account. To this letter I gave him a grandmother's advice, telling him the vast sums he had taken up at more than twenty per cent. were as well secured as when the people lent the money; that I thought he would make a much better figure if he lived upon as little as he possibly could, than ever he had done in throwing away so much money, and let his creditors have all that was left out of his estate as far as it would go, and pay what more was due to them, when accidents of death increased his revenue, for I could not join in anything that would injure myself, or the settlement of his grandfather. I should have told you this before, but in this last professing letter to me, he tells

me that he would rather starve than take up money that I did not approve of: notwithstanding which, in a very few days after my letter, I am assured that Lamb has found a way to help him to a great sum of money; and without saying one word to me, the Duke has mortgaged my jointure as soon as I die, which he certainly may do for his own life; and if he lives till his son is twenty-one, he may starve him into joining with him, and destroy his grandfather's settlement upon the whole family; for when the settlement was made, there were so many before him, that the lawyers did not think of giving his son any allowance in his father's lifetime; and I can think of but one way to prevent all this mischief, which I have a mind to do, and that is, when he is of a proper age, to settle out of my own estate such a sum to be paid yearly by my trustees which will hinder him from being forced by his father, upon condition that if he does join with him to sell any of the estate, that which I gave him shall return back to John Spencer, who I make my heir. Whether this will succeed or not, as I wish it, I cannot be sure, but it is doing all I can to secure what the late Duke of Marlborough so passionately desired. He has a great deal in him like his father, but I cannot say he has any guilt, because he really does not know

what is right and what is wrong, and will always change every three days what he designed, from the influence and flatteries of wretches who think of nothing but of getting something for themselves; and if I should give him my whole estate he would throw it away as he has done his grandfather's, and he would come at last to the Treasury for a pension for his vote. But I believe you have seen, as well as I, that pensions and promises at court are not ready money."

The Duke died in 1758, having, according to Horace Walpole, greatly impoverished his estate; so that his death, before his son came of age, was considered to be an advantage to the property, since the young man might have been induced to join his father in the last mournful resource, according to the same writer, "to sell and pay."*

On the honourable John Spencer, commonly called by the writers of those days Jack Spencer, the affections of the Duchess were, after the death of his eldest brother, chiefly centered. Not all his extravagance, nor the low-lived pranks in which he figured; not even the prospect of seeing him squander away every shilling which he possessed, could alienate from him this fantastic and unjust partiality on the part of his grandmother.

* Letters to Sir Horace Mann, vol. iii. p. 286.

He died, after a profligate and disgraceful career, at the age of six or seven and thirty, "merely," says Horace Walpole, "because he would not be abridged of those invaluable blessings of a British subject, namely, brandy, small-beer, and tobacco."* Notwithstanding these propensities, the Duchess left him in her will a clear income of thirty thousand a year, to the enjoyment of which was annexed a condition, characteristic enough, that he should not accept any place or pension from any government whatsoever. Whilst she thus enriched her unworthy grandson, she disinherited Charles Duke of Marlborough of all the property which was vested in herself to bequeath.

Lady Diana Spencer, the youngest of the Sunderland family, was also a favourite of her grandmother. She appears to have been an object of solicitude to the Duchess, who, it may be remembered, expressed much satisfaction when the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline, called "her Dy" back to bid her hold her head up, which, added the Duchess, "was what I was always telling her." She also quoted "her Dy," with much satisfaction, in her letter to Dr. Hare, when she extenuated her behaviour to Sir Robert Walpole.

* Letters to Sir Horace Mann, vol. ii. p. 144.

In 1731, the Duchess was much gratified by the marriage of "her Dy" with Lord John Russell, afterwards third Duke of Bedford. Writing from Blenheim to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the Duchess, in speaking of this wedding, declares to her gifted correspondent, that it is very much to her satisfaction. "I propose to myself more satisfaction than I thought there had been in store for me." These were the expressions of hope; but, alas! like almost every other object of the Duchess's regard in her own family, Lady Diana Russell died early, surviving her marriage only four years. It is impossible to note these successive deprivations without feeling sincere compassion for the harassed and bereaved old Duchess, who beheld, one by one, her only comforts taken from her old age.

Lord John Russell, when Duke of Bedford, became Secretary of State, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The well-known strictures on his character by Junius, though not historically just, were not without foundation; but, whatever were his faults, he attained eminence as a statesman; and to see her favourite grace the high station in which this alliance would have placed her, would, doubtless, have gratified the heart, already too proud, of her aged but worldly grandmother.

"Her Torrismond," as the Duchess termed John Spencer, indeed survived her, though not many years. His marrying suitably was an event which she had much at heart. "I believe you have heard me say," writes her grace to Lady Mary Wortley, "that I desired to die when I had disposed well of her, (Lady Diana,) but I desire that you would not put me in mind of it, for I find I have a mind to live till I have married my Torrismond, which is a name I have given long to John Spencer."* Unhappily, Torrismond was too frequently to be found in the watchhouse, in company with other young noblemen, to think of domesticating according to the Duchess's desire.

Lady Anne Egerton, the only child of Lady Bridgewater, was also undutiful, according to the Duchess's notions, and to be derided and insulted accordingly. She had been brought up by her grandmother, who, finding that she was neglected after the death of her mother, took charge of her when her other grandchildren were left to her care. Lady Anne married Wriothesley Duke of Bedford, the elder brother of Lord John Russell, to whom his title descended.

In Lady Anne the grandmother's spirit was

* Dallaway's Memoirs of Lady M. W. Lord Wharncliffe. Edition of Lady M. W.

apparent. Their quarrels were continual and violent; and the Duchess, charmed, one must suppose, with her conceit of the eight puppet Misses Trevor, invented the same sort of vengeance in effigy for Lady Anne. She had procured her granddaughter's picture, of which she blackened the face over, and writing on the frame in large letters, "She is much blacker within," placed it in her own sitting-room, for the edification and amusement of all visiters.*

The Duchess of Montague, (Lady Mary Churchill, the youngest of her grace's daughters,) like her eldest sister Henrietta, lived in constant altercation with her mother, whom she survived; the only one of her children whom the Duchess did not follow to the grave. The character of the Duke of Montague, and the honours which he received, have been before mentioned. The Duchess mingled greatly in the world; her concerts and assemblies are mentioned frequently in the letters of Lady Mary Wortley. Her daughter Isabella, Duchess of Manchester, by her sweetness of temper and superior qualities, fastened herself upon the affections of that heart where so few could find a place.

* Horace Walpole mentions this anecdote of Lady Bateman, but a later account specifies Lady Anne Egerton as the heroine of the blackened picture.

Such are some of the details which relate to the domestic troubles of the aged Duchess. Her frequent absence from her children when they were young; the absorbing nature of political pursuits, for which she sacrificed the blessings of affection, and the enjoyment of a peaceful home; the consequent necessity of consigning her children wholly to instructors and servants; perhaps, too, the manners of the times, which conduced to banish love between parent and child by a harsh, unnatural substitution of fear as the principle of conduct;* all contributed to alienate those young minds from her, whilst yet the angry passions which maturity draws forth were unknown. Consistency, impartiality, and a freedom from selfishness, are the qualities essential to win back the filial affection of which nature has implanted the germ in every bosom if, unhappily, it be destroyed. The Duchess was not only totally deficient in these attributes, but she possessed not that easy and kindly temper which can secure affection, even if it fail to command respect. In her family, notwithstanding all their advantages of person and fortune, she was singularly un-

* Those who have read the novels of Richardson, faithful delineations of manners, cannot but recal to mind the descriptions given of parental authority, and of filial fear, by that prolix, but, in some points, incomparable novelist.

fortunate; and she affords a striking instance of the incompatibility of a political career with the habits and feelings of domestic life. It cannot be, therefore, a matter of surprise that her latter days were clouded by depression; that she found herself neglected, and that she hovered between a state of irritated pride, and that condition of low spirits in which we fancy ourselves of no importance to the world, and as well out of it as cumbering the ground. Often, describing herself as generally very "ill and very infirm," she declares that life has ceased to have any charms for her; that she only wishes "to make the passage out of it as easily as possible." To her correspondent, Mr. Scrope, from whom she declares she received more civility than she had met with for years, the Duchess partially discloses her feelings. He seems kindly, and we hope with no interested motive, to have entered into the feelings of a morose old woman, who had placed all her felicity in a consciousness of importance, and who found herself "insignificant."* A few short years previously, and who would have anticipated such a confession? Yet the mortifications of an unhonoured old age appear, if we may trust Mr. Scrope's charitable version of the case, to have improved the chastened character on whose tenderest points

* Coxe MSS., vol. iv.

they bore. In reply to one of her low-spirited letters, he thus addresses her: "I hope your grace will excuse the freedom with which I write, and that you will pardon my observing, by the latter part of your letter, that the great Duchess of Marlborough is not always exempted from the vapours. How your grace could think yourself insignificant, I cannot imagine. You can despise your enemies, (if any such you have;) you can laugh at fools who have authority only in their own imaginations; and your grace hath not only the power, but a pleasure in doing good to every one who is honoured with your friendship or compassion. Who can be more insignificant?" And he concludes this well-meant expostulation with professions of respect and regard.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Duchess of Marlborough's friends and contemporaries —Arthur Maynwaring—Dr. Hare—Sir Samuel Garth—Pope—Lady Mary Wortley Montague—Colley Cibber—Anecdote of Mrs. Oldfield; of Sir Richard Steele.

THERE must have been, undoubtedly, some attaching, as well as admirable qualities in the Duchess of Marlborough, when we consider the number and quality of those friends whom she found it possible to retain until their death; for most of them she survived.

The Duchess's earliest political friend, Lord Godolphin, was never, as far as we can learn, replaced in her confidence and regard by any man in power. Shortly before his lordship's death, she had the misfortune to lose another intimate, though humbler friend, her accomplished correspondent, Arthur Maynwaring.

Mr. Maynwaring, like the Duke and Duchess themselves, had set out in life a zealous Jacobite.

Early in life he had even exercised his pen in favour of King James's government; and it was only after becoming acquainted with the chiefs of the Whig party, that he wholly changed his opinions. After mingling for some years in the literary society of Paris, Maynwaring, returning to London, was made one of the commissioners of Customs, and afterwards, by Lord Godolphin, appointed auditor of the Imprests, a place worth two thousand pounds per annum during a presure of business. Thus provided for, Mr. Maynwaring became the firm and confidential friend of the Duke and Duchess, and of Godolphin; and his judicious advice was often resorted to by his illustrious friends. In return for his zeal and friendship, those by whom he was so much valued, sought to turn him from a disgraceful and unfortunate connexion, into which Maynwaring's literary and dramatic tastes had involved him. This was a connexion with the celebrated Mrs. Oldfield, to whom he became attached when he was upwards of forty, and whom he loved, says his biographer, "with a passion that could not have been stronger, had it been both his and her first love." This gifted actress owed much of her celebrity to the instructions of Maynwaring, who wrote several epilogues and prologues for her benefits, hearing her recite them

in private. By his friends, Maynwaring was so much blamed for his connexion, that Mrs. Oldfield herself, frequently but ineffectually, represented to him that it would be advantageous for his interests to break it off; but for this disinterestedness Maynwaring loved her the more. He died very suddenly, from taking cold whilst walking in the gardens of Holywell-house, in 1712. He divided his personal property, and an estate which came from a long line of ancestry, between Mrs. Oldfield and his sister. For this he was greatly blamed by the "Examiner," but vindicated in a paper supposed to be written by his friend Robert Walpole, afterwards the great minister.

Maynwaring was a man of considerable attainments. His style of writing was praised even by the "Examiner;" his memory is preserved by Steele's dedication of the "Tatler" to him. He was honoured by the entire confidence of the Duchess of Marlborough, and he accorded to her his warmest admiration of her talents, and a partial appreciation of her motives. And he proved himself to be, what she most liked, a sincere friend, not an indiscriminate panegyrist. He told her grace freely what he thought; strove to moderate her resentments; and, whilst he lived, contributed to maintain a

good understanding between her and the Queen, by seeking to mollify the hasty judgments of the often irritated Mrs. Freeman.

Possessing an intimate knowledge of the dispositions of all the actors in that busy scene, Mr. Maynwaring, nevertheless, foresaw that the reign of Queen Sarah, as it was called, would not be of long duration. With the sincerity of a true friend, he strove to warn her of this probable issue of the "passion," as he justly called it, with which the Queen regarded her spoiled friend.* He appreciated her Majesty justly, when he hinted that she had not "a very extraordinary understanding," and that she would, in all probability, eventually prefer the servant who flattered and deceived her, to the one "who told truth, and endeavoured to do good, and to serve right." Sometimes his sincerity displeased the Duchess; and, according to the fashion of most of her grace's correspondents, we find him writing to justify his "poor opinion," which had, he feared, been too hastily expressed. If he wrote from the heart, Maynwaring was, nevertheless, a true admirer of the Duchess's good qualities. He constantly expressed his conviction of the openness and truth of her disposition. Of cunning, or that part of craft which, says Maynwaring,

* Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 103.

"Mr. Hobbes very prettily calls crooked wisdom," he declares her to be entirely exempt. And the advice which he was at times eager to press upon her grace, to conceal her discontent, and to return to court "with the best air that she could," proved that in this view of her character Maynwaring was sincere.* He died at a critical moment, and in him the Duchess lost one of those assiduous and attached adherents, whom it is sometimes the fate of impetuous, but generous characters, to secure as personal friends.

Amongst her advisers and correspondents, Dr. Hare, Bishop of Chichester, performed a grave and conspicuous part. It was his office, seriously though kindly, to admonish her grace; to point out to her the inexpediency of indulging violent passions, upon higher grounds than those defined by her indulgent, and, in some cases, too lenient husband, or by her partial friends Lord Godolphin and Mr. Maynwaring. Yet Dr. Hare, if we may believe the slanderous pen of one of the party writers of the day, was not, in his conduct or opinions, free from a degree of laxity which bordered upon heterodoxy. Having been tutor to the Marquis of Blandford, the deceased and only son of the Duchess, he had acquired a pe-

* Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 100—102.

culiar interest in the regard of those chastened and bereaved parents. By their aid, chiefly, he had obtained, first, the appointment of chaplain-general to the army, and afterwards the deanery of Worcester and bishopric of Chichester. To Dr. Hare's conversation, the free and decided opinions of the Duchess upon matters connected with the church, and upon some religious subjects, may, in all probability, be traced. Like herself, the bishop was even accused of scepticism, a charge so monstrous as not for an instant to be entertained in either case. He held, however, opinions of a very questionable nature; and in a work which he published upon "The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures in the way of Private Judgment," his style appeared to the convocation so irreverent and absurd, that he thought it best to attempt to conceal his being the author. He translated the Book of Psalms into the original Hebrew metre, which he pretended to have discovered; and employed much of his time in the Bangorian controversy with Dr. Hoadly, another intimate friend of the Duchess of Marlborough. Upon the accession of George the First, the bishop had the mortification of being dismissed from his chaplaincy to that monarch,

on account of his irregular and obnoxious opinions.*

That the Duchess should entertain peculiar feelings towards this singular man, feelings which led her to receive meekly from him counsels which few others would have presumed to offer, is not a matter of surprise. Those who have lost a tenderly beloved child, know with what an enduring regard even the lowest menials who have shared our offices of affection, and hours of affliction, are naturally considered; how much more must the instructor who formed the mind of a promising son, be endeared to the parents from whom it had pleased the Creator to summon away those early budding virtues, the combination of mental and corporeal superiority! The Duchess, it appears, was so much affected upon her first interview with Dr. Hare, after the death of her son, that he thought it necessary to write an apology to her grace for his too early intrusion into her presence.† Eventually the Duchess appears to have derived considerable comfort from the frequent correspondence of Dr. Hare, who accompanied the Duke of Marlborough in several of his campaigns.

* Memoirs of the Life of Whiston, p. 102.

† Private Correspondence, vol. i. p. 6.

After the decease of his distinguished patron, Dr. Hare performed an important and friendly duty to the widowed Duchess. He gave her sincere and disinterested counsels; and in so doing evinced his gratitude to the memory of one who loved, with all her faults, the irascible and discontented woman whom he had left to buffet with storms of her own creation. Not all her possessions, nor her rank, nor the acknowledged purity of her conduct in an immoral age, nor even the influence of her husband's great name, could procure the Duchess mental repose, nor ensure to her good-will. She lived, to imitate her own military simile, in constant hostilities. Nor was the garrison of her home faithful and friendly. Mutinies broke out, conspiracies were hourly framed against her dominion, and foreign auxiliaries called in to quell her power and abate her pride. Dr. Hare alone, of her surviving friends, as far as her published correspondence enables us to judge, found courage to point out to his warlike friend, that the sources of these skirmishes existed in her own "ill-grounded suspicions and violent passions." With what candour and right-minded gratitude the Duchess received these admonitions, has already been remarked.

Another friend, whom the Duchess of Marlborough survived, was the amiable Doctor Garth,

author of the "Dispensary," and the intimate associate and physician of the Duke. Garth had the good fortune to retain his popularity at court, and to be appointed the King's physician, when the Duke and Duchess were regarded with coldness. Yet a signal compliment, it was thought, was paid to this humane and accomplished man, when George the First knighted him with the Duke of Marlborough's sword. Dr. Garth was of decided Whig opinions, as were most of the Duchess's associates; and he was of suspected scepticism, as were also many of those in whom she placed confidence. It was, however, so prevalent an imputation in those days, that few eminent men escaped the charge. It must also be allowed, that it was a species of fashionable affectation, for affectation it most probably was, to express, for the poor credit of belonging to a certain philosophical order, a degree of doubt concerning the great truths upon which every hope of human nature depends. Sir Samuel Garth was, says Pope, "a good Christian without knowing himself to be so." It is to be regretted that he did not know it, for he has bequeathed to the members of his profession the imputation to which, at all events, he thoughtlessly contributed, of being averse to the religious belief of our church, as they are

often obliged to be aliens to its observances. This charge, notoriously unjust in the present day, was not, however, fairly urged against Dr. Garth, who died, according to the somewhat partial evidence of Pope, in the communion of the Roman Catholic church.

Whilst he afforded the relief of his art, and the enjoyment of his conversation, to patients of the higher classes, Dr. Garth was not, as the prosperous are apt to be, unmindful of the lowly and suffering. His character appears to have presented a rare compound of bland and conciliating manners with an independent spirit. His labours at the College of Physicians were directed to purposes of charity, which then engaged the attention of that body. His literary talents were applied to satirize the unworthy members of his profession, and to elevate its character. He was an uncommon instance of a man possessing literary attainments and acquiring professional eminence. In those days, and even so late as the time of Darwin, the pursuit of the belles lettres was not inimical to the extension of a medical practice, and Garth's celebrated satire on a portion of his professional brethren introduced him into all that a physician most prizes. Finally, when the corpse of the illustrious Dryden lay neglected and unburied, Dr. Garth brought

the deserted remains to the College of Physicians, raised a subscription to defray the expenses of the funeral, and, following the body to Westminster Abbey, had the office, peculiarly honourable to him under such circumstances, of pronouncing an oration over the grave in which the rescued clay was deposited.

Such was the physician and friend of Marlborough. It appears an endless task to enumerate and to portray the numerous literary characters who poured forth their tribute to the greatness of the Duke, or who shared the favour of the Duchess of Marlborough. Devoid as they both were of any decided literary bias, they were nevertheless, in various ways, so much connected with some writers and wits of the day, that it may not be deemed irrelevant to bring forward a few of those who were thus distinguished.

The offensive lines written by Pope upon the character of the Duchess, as Atossa, could not have been the production of a friend. That the Duchess, in her intercourse with the great and gay, encountered frequently the master-spirit of the day, whose religious and political prepossessions led him to write her attributes in characters of gall, cannot be doubted. Pope, however, was not, it appears, one of her correspondents; and subsequently, in her intimacy with

Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the Duchess cherished his bitterest enemy. That gifted woman, indeed, found in the Duchess a kindred spirit. The collision of such minds must have been remarkable. Lady Mary was yet in her prime, when the Duchess, morose, and a cripple, delighted to visit her, and to entertain her brilliant friend, and be in turn entertained. The great world, its hollowness, and its consequent disappointments, were sufficiently unveiled to both, to render the confidence of social life comparatively delightful. Yet both still loved the world too well; both were essentially worldly in their natures. The one turned her calculating mind to power; the other to admiration. The career of their youth, brilliant in each, was in each succeeded by a joyless, an unloved, almost a despised old age.

It was the pleasure of the Duchess, in her later days, to receive, without ceremony, Lady Mary and her daughter Lady Bute, who frequently sat by her Grace while she dined, or went through the process of casting up her accounts. Both Lady Mary and her daughter were especial favourites, and enjoyed, accordingly, the rare fortune of never quarrelling with her grace. To them she unfolded the events of her long and harassing life; to them she communicated, with

tears, the anecdote, so often quoted, of her cutting off the fair and luxuriant hair of which she was even, at that age, proud, to provoke her stoical husband, when he had one day offended her. The mode in which the provocation was offered, and was received, was characteristic of both parties. The Duchess placed the tresses which the Duke had prized in an antechamber, through which he must often necessarily pass, in order that they might attract his view. The Duke showed no symptoms of observation and vexation, appeared as calm as was his wont, and the Duchess thought that her scheme had failed: she sought her ringlets, but they had disappeared. Years afterwards, she discovered them in a cabinet belonging to the Duke, after his death, amongst other articles which she knew he prized the most of all his precious collections. And at this point of her story, the Duchess, as well she might, melted into tears.* The noble, kind heart which had been devoted to her was cold in the grave, and those of her family who remained, were worse than indifferent to her joys or her woes.

The Duchess's early admirer, Colley Cibber, must not be omitted in the list of those who have contributed to exalt her fame. Cibber, as we have seen, wrote with enthusiasm of her personal

* Lord Wharncliffe, vol. i. p. 76.

charms, which with equal liberality he alleged to have outlived the days of her youth. And not only from the custom, at that time fashionable, of admitting actors and actresses, even of doubtful character, into the society of the great, but in the practice of his profession as a player, Cibber must have had frequent opportunities of marking the gradual ripening to perfection, and the less gradual process of decay of those charms which riveted his faculties. The company of comedians to whom Cibber belonged were called the King's servants, and styled gentlemen of the great chamber. They wore a livery of scarlet and gold, and were made the peculiar concern of the court, the King frequently interfering in their concerns and management. This company performed at Drury Lane, except when by royal command it was transported to Hampton Court, or to Windsor, to entertain the assembled court.* On such occasions, the Duchess must frequently have encountered the sculptor's son, who, elated with a commission in a regiment of horse, had had, when first they met, indulged brighter day-dreams than his future existence realised. The stage, nevertheless, was at that time at its height of prosperity: all classes contributed to honour and support its ornaments. The original Lady Townly and Lady Betty

* Life of Colley Cibber, p. 66.

Modish, the beautiful but the frail Mrs. Oldfield, is said to have acquired her inimitable art of representing the manners of aristocratic females, from the number of high-born ladies whom she visited, whilst yet under the acknowledged protection of General Churchill, and, afterwards, of Arthur Maynwaryng. Bolingbroke, with all his Jacobite notions, thought himself not degraded by an intimate friendship with Booth. The spirit of the age was dramatic, as Steele's "extravagant pleasantry" exemplifies. Being asked, by a nobleman, after the representation of Henry the Eighth, at Hampton Court, how the King, George the First, liked the play, "In truth," answered the accomplished manager, "so terribly well, my lord, that I was afraid I should have lost all my actors; for I was not sure the King would not keep them to fill the posts at court, that he saw them so fit for in the play."*

Cibber, nevertheless, was, in the commencement of his career, after he had exchanged the show and uniform of the cavalry for the sock and buskin, not only contented, but delighted, with a salary of ten shillings a week. It is well known, also, that he kept back his play of the "Careless Husband," in despair of not being able to find an actress to personate, as in those critical days it

* Life of Colley Cibber, p. 461.

would be necessary to personate, the woman of fashion, that Lady Betty Modish whom Mrs. Oldfield improved afterwards to perfection, by the society and connexions of her accomplished and high-born admirers. She is acknowledged, indeed, by Cibber, to have been the prototype of that lively being of the dramatist's fancy; "the agreeably gay woman of quality, a little too conscious of her natural attractions;" or, in less courtly language, a well-bred coquet.*

Originally of the same profession that Cibber had adopted when he waited upon the Duchess of Marlborough at Derby, Sir Richard Steele, afterwards appointed to be the head of the royal company of comedians, deserves to be noticed, from his projected connexion with the fame of the Marlborough family. For Steele, in his paper called "The Reader," has left an account of his intention to write a life of the Duke of Marlborough, confining himself to the Duke's military career:

* Such was her excellence in the "Provoked Husband," that the managers made her a present of fifty guineas above her agreement, which was only a verbal one; "for they knew," says Cibber, "that she was incapable of deserting them for another stage." One of the many good traits in the character of this erring woman was her refusing to receive her salary, when disabled by illness from performing, although her agreement entitled her to receive it.—Life of Colley Cibber, p. 291.

a project which, unhappily, was never executed, but the materials for which were, according to Steele's assertion, in his possession.

The conduct and the conscience of Steele were incessantly at variance. His natural disposition was amiable, but so incautious, that his famous parallel between Addison and himself must be admired equally for its candour and its truth. "The one," says Steele, speaking of his friend, "with patience, foresight, and temperate address, always waited and stemmed the torrent; while the other often plunged himself into it, and was as often taken out by the temper of him who stood weeping on the bank for his safety, whom he could not dissuade from leaping into it." This beautiful description of true friendship is indeed characteristic of him who found it inconvenient to have written the "Christian Hero," from the comparisons between his practice and his precepts which were incessantly drawn by his associates. Steele had all the brilliancy, and many of the failings, of his gifted countrymen. That his mind was never debased by the irregular pursuits and dissolute society to which he gave his time, is apparent from the beautiful sentiments which pervade that exquisite comedy, the "Conscious Lovers," one of the most elegant delineations of that species of love which borders on

romance, in the range of our dramatic literature. Those who remember the most pathetic and elevated strain of reflection which is displayed in a certain paper of the Spectator, in which this feeling writer describes his introduction suddenly into the apartment of a dying friend, must allow Steele to have possessed infinite power over the passions of the human heart. Devoted to the House of Hanover, reviled by Swift, and expelled from the House of Commons for his paper, the Englishman, in which he advocated principles congenial to those of the Duchess of Marlborough, Steele was doubtless an approved acquaintance, though perhaps not on the footing of an intimate friend.

A strange contrast to the preceding characters whose peculiarities have been faintly touched, was the celebrated William Penn, who appears among the list of the Duke of Marlborough's correspondents; and, if slight expressions may be trusted, was among the number of the Duchess's privileged acquaintance. Penn, in a letter to the great general, whom he addresses as "my noble friend," in 1703, speaks of sending a letter under "my Lady Duchess's cover," and mentions the Lord Treasurer Godolphin, whose correct judgment he commends in the incidental manner of one, intimate with the circle to which he refers.

This singular and high-minded personage, whom Burnet severely calls "a vain, talking man," came into constant collision with the Duke and Duchess at the court of James the Second, where, in spite of his refusal to uncover in the King's presence, he was received with distinction. Penn was perhaps not the less acceptable to the Duchess from his non-conformist principles. His fearlessness, and the persecutions which, for conscience' sake, he sustained in the early part of his life, perhaps redeemed, in her eyes, the visionary nature of his religious impressions, the absurdity, to her strong mind, of his secret communications from God, and the suddenness of his conversion. At all events, the sterling character of Penn, and his contempt of worldly advantages, must have formed an agreeable variety among her numerous, and dissimilar associates.

CHAPTER XVII.

The different places of residence which belonged to the Duchess—Holywell-house, Wimbledon, Blenheim—Account of the old mansion of Woodstock—Its projected destruction—Efforts of Sir John Vanburgh to save it—Attack upon the Duchess, relative to Blenheim, in the Examiner.

HAVING given a short sketch of those associates in whose conversation the Duchess delighted, or on whose aid, public or private, she depended, it remains now to describe those stately abodes where she lived in sober grandeur, but the splendour of which could not procure her peace of mind, nor ensure her even the attentions due to her rank and years.

The earliest, and perhaps the favourite residence of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, was Holywell, the spot where she first saw the light, and the scene with which her youthful associations were connected. The site of the house in which Richard Jennings of Holywell, as he is desig-

nated, resided, when his daughter Sarah was born, has already been described. The dwelling was, in modern days, inhabited by Dr. Predy, rector of St. Alban's Abbey, but now, like some other traces of its celebrated inmate, it is levelled to the ground.*

Near the tenement, comparatively humble, in which the Duchess was born, the Duke of Marlborough built a mansion of many rooms, and of handsome external appearance. Its extensive gardens, laid out in the old-fashioned style, are well remembered by the inhabitants of St. Albans; and Holywell was endeared to them, not only by revered associations with the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, but by more recent recollections connected with a respected descendant by marriage of the Spencer family, who long dwelt at Holywell. Travellers who passed near the pile which John Duke of Marlborough erected, regarded that early abode with interest. Of infinitely less elegance than Wimbledon is reputed to have been, of far less splendour than Blenheim, it presented the true features of a respectable and substantial English mansion; it bore the aspect of comfort; it ap-

* It was not situated exactly on the spot, but near to the summer-house, which has been mentioned in p. 10. vol. i. of this work. The summer-house is also pulled down.

peared like an emblem of the Duke's early prosperity—a sort of stepping-stone to Wimbledon and Blenheim. Perhaps, had he rested there, his lot in life might have been more peaceful, though less distinguished.*

At all events, Holywell was a spot replete with interest, and the boast of St. Albans, for there the Duke of Marlborough lived as a private gentleman; sufficiently near to the town for its inhabitants to claim his grace as a neighbour, yet distant enough for dignity, and, if desirable, even for seclusion.

That the Duke and Duchess felt no small pride and pleasure in St. Albans is evident; and probably at one period of their lives, the height of their ambition, as far as residence was concerned, was to build a house at the place where their humble fortunes could be progressively

* In Holywell-house, the Dowager Lady Spencer, mother of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, long resided. Her ladyship received among her guests the late antiquary, —— Browne, Esq. of St. Albans, whose death, at a very advanced age, took place very recently. The authoress had the honour of conversing with this venerable antiquary, but could not learn from him that there were any particular traces in Holywell-house of the Duchess or her children, though there are several, as Mr. Browne informed her, of the Spencer and Cavendish family, more especially of the present Duke of Devonshire, whose visits to Holywell in childhood were frequent.

traced. A spacious and costly pew in the Abbey, adorned with beautiful carving, still attracts admiration on entering that venerable edifice.

These remarks might induce the traveller through St. Albans to search with some interest for Holywell-house. Unfortunately it exists no longer. Several years ago it passed from the Spencer family into other hands; and although the house was not in a dilapidated state, and appeared to be a fitting residence for a gentleman of a good establishment; although even higher considerations might have had some weight with the parties concerned; who must, one would suppose, have deeply regretted the expediency of destroying the old place; yet it *was* destroyed. The work of devastation terminated with a sale; and the materials were disposed of by auction.*

The House at Wimbledon, in which the Duchess lived, has also perished, though from a different cause. The manor of Wimbledon is of

* From the catalogue, Holywell-house must have been very commodious; but the rooms, though numerous, were not large. The authoress saw it on the eve of its destruction, and, not being at all aware of its peculiar interest to her, was struck by its massive though not picturesque appearance. It commanded a fine view of St. Alban's Abbey.

considerable celebrity. Sir Thomas Cecil purchased it from Sir Christopher Hatton, whilst he was in possession under the grant from Queen Elizabeth, and in 1588 rebuilt it in a most magnificent manner.

In 1599, Queen Elizabeth is said to have visited the Lord Burghley here, and to have staid three days; after which she proceeded to Nonsuch.*

In 1628, the house received considerable damage by the blowing up of some gunpowder. It was afterwards repaired and beautified. The outside was painted in fresco by Francis Cleyne. Fuller calls Wimbledon-house "a daring structure," and says that by some it has been thought to equal Nonsuch, if not to exceed that far famed royal residence.†

The estate was afterwards purchased for Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles the First, and here the King and she sometimes resided. "The mansion at Wimbledon," says Mr. Lysons, in his work on the Environs of London, "is mentioned among the houses as belonging to the

* On this occasion the churchwardens of Kingston paid "twenty pence" for mending the ways when the Queen went from Wimbledon to Nonsuch.

† The survey taken of it by order of parliament, in 1649, describes it minutely, and is very curious. It is printed in the Archæologia of the Society of Antiquaries, vol. x. p. 399, 8vo., from the original in the Augmentation Office.

crown, in the inventory of the jewels and pictures of King Charles the First. It is remarkable that that monarch was so little aware of the fate preparing for him by his enemies, that, a few days before he was brought to trial, he ordered the seeds of some melons to be planted in his garden at Wimbledon. It was afterwards sold to Baynes, and by him probably to Lambert, the parliament's general. When he had been discarded by Cromwell, he retired to this house, and turned florist, having the finest tulips and gillyflowers that could be got for love or money. He also excelled in painting flowers, some specimens of which remained for many years at this house."

A fate seems to hang over certain estates and nouses. The Restoration gave back Wimbledon to Queen Henrietta, who sold the house to Lord Bristol, and he to the Marquis of Carmarthen, whose trustees sold it to Sir Theodore Janseen. Sir Theodore, for what reason does not appear, pulled down the magnificent house in which Charles and his Queen had resided, and began to build a new one, probably on a smaller scale than the old building. The South Sea business involving Sir Theodore in the general ruin, the estate was purchased by the Duchess of Marlborough. She, in her turn, destroyed what Sir Theodore had built, and erected a new house on

the north side of the knoll on which the present house stands, after a design of the Earl of Burlington.*

This fabric was not doomed long to stand, for the Duchess, not approving of the situation, desired his lordship to give her a design for a house on the south side; and having obtained a plan, she pulled down her partly-erected house, and constructed another. But this mansion was destined to destruction also; it was bequeathed by her to John Spencer, Esq., from whom it came to his son, Earl Spencer, in whose time, and on Easter Monday, 1785, it was almost entirely burnt down by accident. The ruins were cleared away, and the grounds levelled and turfed, so that scarcely a trace even of the foundation was left. Such was the fate of this abode of the Duchess, which, in her later days, she preferred to all others. The present house was built in 1798. It stands in a park seven miles in compass, containing about twelve hundred acres, (laid out by Browne,) which affords a beautiful home prospect, with a fine piece of water towards the north, and an extensive view over Surrey and Kent to the south.

The Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, could

* There is a view of this, the Duchess's house, in the fifth volume of the "Vitruvius Britannicus."

they have foreseen these occurrences, might have been excused if superstitious fears had assailed them, when on the eve of devoting a portion of their wealth to some new structure. The desire of Marlborough, so feelingly expressed, that he might live at Blenheim in peace, was not to be gratified. The progress of that structure was attended by difficulties and vexations truly inimical to quiet; and various accounts have been given of the cause and details of those wearying disputes and disappointments which embittered Marlborough's associations with Blenheim. Upon the proposal of Queen Anne, and the vote of Parliament, it had been determined, in 1704, that the British nation should build the Duke of Marlborough a structure suitable to the residence of their great and wealthy general, and emblematic of national gratitude and of royal munificence. Half a million was voted for the building, and on the eighteenth of June, 1705, the first stone of the Castle, as it was called, was laid.*

* The following account, supplied by William Upcott, Esq., from some one of the daily papers of that day, is curious. "Woodstock, June 19. Yesterday being Monday, about six o'clock in the evening, was laid the first stone of the Duke of Marlborough's house, by Mr. Vanbrugge, and then seven gentlemen gave it a stroke with a hammer, and threw down

Notwithstanding the vote of parliament, the Duke of Marlborough, considering, as he well might, the uncertainty of public favour, and the slender nature of that cobweb entitled public honour, deemed it prudent never to issue any orders for the building except through the Treasury.* There is a manuscript letter of his extant, which expressly enforces this caution. The architect selected for the great work was Sir John Vanburgh, probably appointed from interest, when we reflect that Sir Christopher Wren was in all his strength and fame, and actually made a plan of one side of the building, of which Lord Godolphin approved much more

each of them a guinea; Sir Thomas Wheate was the first, Dr. Bouchel the second, Mr. Vanbrugge the third; I know not the rest. There were several sorts of musick; three morris dances; one of young fellows, one of maidens, and one of old beldames. There were about a hundred buckets, bowls, and pans, filled with wine, punch, cakes, and ale. From my lord's house all went to the Town-hall, where plenty of sack, claret, cakes, &c., were prepared for the gentry and better sort; and under the Cross eight barrels of ale, with abundance of cakes, were placed for the common people. The stone laid by Mr. Vanbrugge was eight square, finely polished, about eighteen inches over, and upon it were these words inlayed in pewter—*In memory of the battel of Blenheim, June* 8, 1705, *Anna Regina.*"

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi.

highly than of anything that was subsequently done by Vanburgh; adding to his commendations, that he was sure nothing that was designed by Vanburgh or Hawkesmoor would please him so well. Wren was afterwards employed in the construction of Marlborough-house.

No sooner was the work commenced, than we find, by the manuscript letters, that the Duchess took a considerable share in the management of the works, combating stoutly against the extravagances and impositions of Sir John Vanburgh in detail, though she was wholly unable to check the gross amount of his charges.

On a contract for lime to build Blenheim, made, in 1705, between the Duke and Vanburgh, the Duchess wrote these characteristic words: "Is not that, sevenpence-halfpenny per bushel, a very high price, when they had the advantage of making it in the park? besides, in many things of that nature, false measure had been proved."* It is no wonder that Sir John Vanburgh, very soon afterwards, began to call the Duchess very "stupid and troublesome," and ended by venting upon her grace the coarsest terms of abuse that anger, unmitigated by good breeding, could devise.

In 1709, the works at Blenheim had pro-

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 8.

gressed so far as to enable Vanburgh to flatter the Duke with a hope that the house would be ready for his grace's reception soon after his return from the continent, where Marlborough then was. In the same letter in which this intimation was given, a minute detail of all the offices was also set forth; so that notwithstanding the difficulty of procuring stone, of which Vanburgh complained, and other hindrances, there seemed to be every prospect of a favourable termination to the long-deferred hopes of the noble owners of Blenheim.*

And now a question arose, in which, without any partiality to Sir John Vanburgh's conduct, we must acknowledge that his taste and judgment were conspicuously displayed, and that to him we owe an effort (fruitless, unfortunately,) to preserve and restore one of those remains, truly of English character, which are so fondly prized by all British hearts.

The manor-house, or ancient palace of Woodstock, was, in 1709, before the ravages of improvement, and the chimeras of the landscape gardener, attacked and laid it low, still standing in tolerable repair. It appears, from an old print,† to have been a picturesque building, with

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 8.

† In the possession of William Upcott, Esq.

a quadrangular court, and towers at each corner. It occupied a slightly elevated spot near the river Glyme, then a narrow stream, at a short distance from the grand bridge now thrown across the lake. The situation was extremely beautiful, for art had not then lowered the rugged hill, of which Vanburgh in his letters complains. Rich coverlets of wood concealed the old house, whilst in front flowed the gentle stream on whose banks Chaucer wandered. The manor was not only distinguished as the scene of several parliaments which were held there, but had still more romantic claims to respect and preservation. It was within its precincts that a bower, or retired dwelling, was erected by Henry the Second for his Rosamond, in whose gentle name, seclusion, and misfortunes, we are apt to forget her error, and the cause of her fate. The fabled labyrinth is said to have derived its origin from being confounded with the structure of the palace gardens, which were formed of the Topiary work—twisted alleys resembling a maze. A gate-house in front of the palace gave dignity to the whole tenement, and enclosed at one time Elizabeth of England, the captive inmate of the manor, from a window of which she is said to have viewed with envy a milkmaid, and to have written on a shutter, with some charcoal, those beautiful lines expres-

sive of her wishful desire for freedom, which are extant.

These legends are familiar to us all; yet it is impossible, in describing the fate and fall of the manor, to revert to them without regret. Such associations, combined with the recollection of Chaucer, who resided in an old house at Woodstock, and who, in his "Dream," has described the Bower, must be called up with pleasurable though melancholy sensations. In later days, the manor formed an abiding place for those daring Roundheads, whose concealments, and the stratagems of which they made use to maintain their privacy, have been woven into a tale of such powerful interest, that it requires few other arguments to enhance regret for the old manor, than that it has been a subject for the pen of Walter Scott.

In 1709, the manor became the subject of correspondence between the Duchess of Marlborough and Vanburgh. The Duchess had, it seems, repeatedly visited Blenheim in company with Lord Godolphin, who represents her as "extremely prying," and not only detecting many errors in that part of the building of the Castle which was finished in 1706, but as well mending such as could be rectified without waiting for the Duke's opinion. "I am apt to think," adds the Lord

Treasurer, "that she has made Mr. Vanburgh a little +,* but you will find find both pleasure and comfort from it."†

It is worthy of remark, however, that the friendly Lord Treasurer dwells much upon the forward state of the garden and the grounds, but passes no opinion upon the building.

When the subject of taking down or leaving the old manor came to be debated, Sir John Vanburgh temperately, and to his credit, explained his reasons for wishing to retain so beautiful an object within view of Blenheim. The arguments which he advanced were excellent, and such as would readily present themselves to any intelligent mind. But he addressed himself to one who had far more pleasure in adding up a sum of compound addition in her own curious, but infallible way, than in gazing upon any beautiful ruins. To her the recollection of fair Rosamond was a vain fancy; the notion of Sir John's keeping the old manor in preservation, a whim; and besides, there was a yet more cogent reason for sacrificing, than for preserving the ruins. Already had an attempt made by Vanburgh, to convert the manor into an habitation, caused an expenditure, according to the Duchess, of three thousand

* The word is expressed thus + in the original letter.

† Coxe MSS., vol. xli. p. 14.

pounds; from the acknowledgment of Vanburgh, eleven hundred pounds; and the shrewd Sarah began to suspect, when the architect became anxious upon the subject, that he designed the manor as an habitation for himself, and had some sinister motive for the perseverance which he showed on the subject. After many discussions, in the course of which Godolphin, on being applied to for his opinion, said "that he might as well hesitate about removing a wen from his face, as delay taking down so unsightly an object from the brow of the hill," the old manor was demolished; and the work of devastation was finished with the chapel, which Vanburgh made one final struggle to save, but which was condemned.* Several curious relics were found when the ground was levelled, for the hill behind it was of a rugged, intractable shape, as Vanburgh described it. Amongst other things, a ring, with the words inscribed on it, "Remember the Covenant," was given by the masons to Lady Diana Spencer.

The main work at Blenheim proceeded very slowly. In 1710, it was very abruptly, and as Vanburgh thought, very unceremoniously, stopped by the Duchess, who sent directions to the workmen that the orders of the architect were to be wholly

* For the correspondence on this subject, hitherto unpublished, see Appendix.

disregarded. The Duchess's disgrace at court had possibly, however, some share in this unexpected proceeding. During that year Vanburgh's estimate of the expenses of the house was, that they would not exceed two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. In October, 1710, he had received two hundred thousand pounds from the Treasury. Letters between him and the Duchess, the one remonstrating, the other justifying the enormous sums which were laid out, are to be found in the Manuscript Correspondence. By a warrant from Godolphin, Sir John Vanburgh was authorised to make contracts, &c., and to lay them before the Lord Treasurer.* Every expectation might reasonably be formed, that the government would complete the building at its own cost. In October and November, 1710, it appears that Vanburgh received, in addition to the assistance of eight thousand pounds, the sum of one thousand pounds weekly to pay the workmen.† In 1712, the building expenses were put a stop to by the Queen, who alleged, among other reasons, the puerile excuse that the Duchess of Marlborough having taken away slabs and locks from her rooms at St. James's, she would not build her a house. The fact was, the Queen, as well as the Duke's enemies, were startled at

* Appendix. † Coxe MSS.

the immense sums which had been spent, without the interminable structure being nearly completed.

In 1714, a statement being sent in by Sir John Vanburgh, two hundred and twenty thousand pounds were found to have been received from the Treasury, and the debts due by the crown for the building amounted to sixty thousand pounds.* After this crisis in the affairs of Blenheim, the Duke of Marlborough took the completion of the work into his own hands, and desired that an estimate of the expense might be given by Vanburgh. At this time even the shell of the building could not, it was calculated, be completed without many thousand pounds more. It was also necessary to get an act of parliament passed, devolving the responsibility of the debts already incurred, on the crown; a measure which was, happily for the Duke and his heirs, carried in the first year of George the First. Affairs now seemed to be placed on a safe footing; but Blenheim was never, at that period, likely to be finished for Marlborough to inhabit. "Besides," adds the Duchess, writing to her friend Mrs. Clayton, "all without doors, where there is nothing done, is a chaos that turns one's brains

* Coxe Papers.

but to think of it; and it will cost an immense sum to complete the causeway, and that ridiculous bridge in which I counted thirty-three rooms. Four houses are to be at each corner of the bridge; but that which makes it so much prettier than London Bridge is, that you may sit in six rooms, and look out at window into the high arch, while the coaches, are driving over your head." *

The Duchess, as it may be perceived by this satirical description, was not very well pleased with Vanburgh. In fact, upon a previous examination of the accounts, many charges grossly extravagant were detected; as well as abundant errors of design.

In the course of the fabrication of the palace, nervous fears seem to have assailed the Duke and Duchess, concerning the immense income requisite to maintain an establishment in such an overgrown palace. It is amusing to find Sir John Vanburgh thus consoling the Duchess by his parallel of Castle Howard, respecting the size of which the noble owners had had the same fears. After discussing some other matters, he writes, in 1713, thus:—†

"He (Lord Carlisle) likewise finds that all his rooms, with moderate fires, are ovens, and

* Coxe, p. 642. † Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 74.

that this great house does not require above one pound of wax and two of tallow candles a night to light it more than his house at London did; nor, in short, is he at any expense more whatsoever than he was in the remnant of an old house; but three housemaids and one man to keep the whole house and offices in perfect cleanliness, which is done to such a degree, that the kitchen, and all the offices and passages under the principal floor, are as dry as the drawing-room; and yet there is a great deal of company, and very good housekeeping. So that, upon the whole, (except the keeping of the new gardens,) the expense of living in this great fine house does not amount to above a hundred pounds a year more than was spent in the old one.

"If you think the knowledge of this may be of any satisfaction to my Lady Marlborough, pray tell her what you hear; and (if you think it proper) as from yourself, I could wish you to say what you know to be true, that whether I am quite convinced or not of my having been so much in the wrong in my behaviour to her as she is pleased to think me, yet, while she does think me so, I can't but set the greatest value upon her *generosity in urging my Lord Marlborough in my favour*. I must own to you, at the same time, that her notion, that I had not

done what I did, but upon her declining at court, has been no small inducement to me to expose myself so frankly as I have done in my Lord Duke's and her particular cause; for though I could have borne she should have thought me a *brute*, I could not endure she should think me a *rascal*."

At his decease, the Duke left, as has been stated, "ten thousand pounds a year" to the Duchess, according to Sir John Vanburgh, "to spoil Blenheim her own way; and twelve thousand pounds a year to keep herself clean and go to law." Be that as it may, the Duchess had the credit and satisfaction of completing the palace, which was nothing like an habitation in Marlborough's time, at the cost of half the sum which had been entrusted to her out of his estates for the purpose. The triumphal arch, and the column on which the statue of Marlborough stands, were erected at her own expense. The united sums paid by government, and by the Duke and his widow, are computed to amount to three hundred thousand pounds.*

Of the enjoyment of law, the Duchess had indeed abundant opportunities. In 1721, she and the Duke's executors were sued by Edward

* Coxe.

Strong, sen. and jun., for debts incurred on Blenheim, but were defended so successfully that they came off triumphant. It was on an occasion of this nature, either in this suit, or in the action brought against her by her grandson, that she sat in court during the trial, and was so much delighted with the address of Mr. Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, who was her counsel, that she presented him, immediately after the termination of the trial, with a fine sword, as a perpetual retainer in her favour.*

The feuds which had commenced between the Duchess and Vanburgh never subsided. Some years after all communication between them had ceased, it was the wish of the architect to visit Blenheim, which his patroness, Lady Carlisle, and some of her family, were desirous to inspect. Sir John stayed two nights at Blenheim, but there was an order issued to the servants, under the Duchess's own hand, not to let him enter the castle, and lest that should not mortify him sufficiently, having heard that his wife was to be one of the party, she sent an express the night before they came to Woodstock, with orders that if Lady Vanburgh came to Blenheim, the ser-

* Newspapers. Anecdote supplied by W. Upcott, Esq.

vants should not suffer her to see the house and gardens. The enraged architect and his lady were therefore obliged to remain at the inn whilst the Castle Howard ladies viewed the building.*

Such petty revenge augured a miserable old age ; but the Duchess gloried in the storm. With all her immense revenue, computed to be about forty thousand pounds a year, she continued to wrangle about the building debts of Blenheim, and obtained an injunction against Sir John Vanburgh in Chancery, on the score of a sum which she could much better afford to lose than the poor artificers, or even the architect, whom she refused to pay, alleging that they were employed by government, and not by the Duke of Marlborough. Upon this, Vanburgh produced Godolphin's warrant, and for once his interests and those of the Duchess coincided. Long and curious details of this cause are to be found in the Coxe manuscripts; but, however agitating and anxious the subject may have been to the Duchess and to her enemy, the litigation to which they were obliged to have recourse has lost its interest in modern eyes.

* Letter from Vanburgh to Tonson. D'Israeli's Curiosities of Literature. 1823.

There is, however, no doubt but that Vanburgh was justly accused by the Duchess of extravagance in many instances, and of exceeding his commission in others. She even taxed him with building one entire court at Blenheim without the Duke's knowledge. She detected his bad taste and grasping spirit, and despised his mismanagement,—of which latter the best proof was, that when, upon the death of the Duke, the whole charge of the building fell into her hands, she completed it in the manner, and at the reduced expense, which has been described.

That "wicked woman of Marlborough," as Sir John Vanburgh termed the Duchess, had perhaps no greater error in his eyes than the penetration with which she discovered his narrow pretensions, his inadequacy, and wanton waste, not to say peculation.

It may not be deemed impertinent to sum up the foregoing account of all the perplexities and errors which attended the building of Blenheim, by an extract from the Duchess's opinions of the whole affair, written many years after the virulence of her animosity may be reasonably supposed to have ceased.

Regarding the attack upon herself in the Examiner, which gave an account of the sums which

had been exhausted on Blenheim, the Duchess observes:

"Upon the subject of Blenheim, which every friend I have knows I was always against building at such expense, and as long as I meddled with it at all, I took as much pains to lessen the charge every way, as if it had been to be paid for out of the fortune that was to provide for my own children; for I always thought it too great a sum even for the Queen to pay, and nothing made it tolerably easy to me but my knowing that as she never did a generous thing of herself, if that expense had not been recommended by the parliament, and paid out of the civil list, she would have done nothing with the money that was better. But I never liked any building so much for the show and vanity of it, as for its usefulness and convenience, and therefore I was always against the whole design of it, as too big and unwieldy; whether I considered the pleasure of living in it, or the good of my family that were to enjoy it hereafter; besides that the greatness of the work made it longer in finishing, and consequently would hinder Lord Marlborough from enjoying it when it was reasonable to lose no time; and I made Mr. Vanburgh my enemy by the constant disputes I had with him to prevent his extravagance, which I did effectually in many

instances, notwithstanding all the follies and waste which, in spite of all that could be said, *he* has certainly committed."*

* Letter to Mr. Hutchinson, Coxe MSS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Old age and decline of the Duchess—Her incessant wrangling with Sir Robert Walpole—Her occupations—The compilation of her Memoirs.

It is now necessary to touch upon the closing scene of the Duchess's long and eventful life. Let it not be supposed that it passed in a calm retirement from the turmoils of the world, or in the agitating though small sphere of domestic faction. She was a politician to the last; but the gales which had in early life driven her along, now blew from a different direction. She despised and reviled the Whig administration of Sir Robert Walpole, with as much inveteracy as she had formerly manifested towards Lord Rochester and Lord Oxford. She considered the mode of managing public affairs to be disgraceful to her country.* She professed to deem it a sacred duty

* Life of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough. Published in 1745.

to use every exertion to defeat the measures of the minister, Walpole; and perhaps that profligate minister had, in the three kingdoms, no enemy more potent, as far as the influence of property was concerned, and certainly not one more determined, than Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.

It was in vain that the minister attempted to conciliate her by proffered honours. Few of the favours which he had to confer came up to her ideas of what her family and her influence merited. Sir Robert had revived the order of the Bath, a measure described by his son as an "artful bank of thirty-six ribbons to supply a fund of favours in lieu of places." "He meant too," adds the lively historian, "to stave off the demands for garters, and intended that the red should be a step for the blue, and accordingly took one of the former himself." He offered the new order to the Duchess for her grandson, the Duke, and for the Duke of Bedford, who had married one of her granddaughters. The answer he received was a haughty intimation that her grandson should take nothing but the garter. "Madam," answered Sir Robert, "they who take the Bath will sooner have the Garter." He proved the sincerity of this assurance, by taking the

garter himself in the year following, with the Duke of Richmond, who, like himself, had been previously installed knight of the Bath.*

On the accession of George the Second, the hated ascendency of Walpole, greatly to the wrath of the Duchess, gained fresh strength. The King doubtless preferred another man, but the Queen's influence was all-powerful; she had long desired Sir Robert, whose stability in power was, in this instance, based upon his knowledge of mankind, and who proffered to her Majesty that respectful devotion which the rest of the world assigned to the mistress, not to the wife of George the Second. The Queen repaid this proof of discernment by a preference which ceased only with the existence of the minister. Before the real choice of the King had become public, and when it was still supposed that Sir Spencer Compton was to be premier, the King and Queen received the nobility at their temporary abode at Leicester-house. Lady Walpole, as her son relates, could not make her way between the scornful backs and elbows of her late devotees, nor approach nearer to the Queen than the third or fourth row. But no sooner did the gracious Caroline perceive her, than she exclaimed, "There,

* Walpole's Reminiscences, p. 293.

I am sure, I see a friend." The crowd fell back, and, "as I came away," said her ladyship, "I might have walked over their heads."*

This predilection would, independent of her injuries, be sufficient to account for the Duchess's aversion to the very Princess whom, some years before, she had extolled as a model of excellence. The Queen, it might have been thought, would have possessed a hold over her good opinion, from the very nature of her education, which she received from the careful and judicious hands of the electress Sophia, the "nursing mother" of the Hanoverian interests. But nothing could mitigate the aversion and contempt of the Duchess towards the new school of Whiggism, which, to her penetrating view, but little resembled the disinterested spirit of Godolphin, or the unflinching adherence of her son-in-law Sunderland to what he termed patriotism. That word had now gone quite out of fashion, and it consisted with Sir Robert Walpole's notions of perfect good-breeding, upon which it was his weakness to pique himself, to laugh generally at those high-minded sentiments which the Duchess, to her credit, ever professed, and the absence of which, however often they might be violated in the

* Reminiscences.

frailty of human nature, could not be compensated by the "pompous pleasantry"* with which Walpole satirised all that is good and great.

The Duchess has left on record the workings of her powerful mind. With an intellect unenfeebled by age, whilst she described herself, in 1737, as a perfect cripple, who had very little enjoyment of life, and could not hold out long, she gave ample proof that her reasoning faculties were unimpaired, her discernment as acute as it had ever been; and that wonderful power, the result of both qualities, of seeing into the events of futurity as far as the concerns of this world are involved, had in her arrived at a degree of perfection which can scarcely be too much admired.

It was her practice to write down her impressions and recollections of the various circumstances in which she had been engaged, and to entrust them to such friends as were likely to be interested in those details. Many of these productions she put into the hands of Bishop Burnet. Her character of Queen Anne; her able account of Sacheverell, written with impartiality and clearness; her character of Lord Halifax, of the Duke of Shrewsbury, Lord Somers, Lord Cowper, Swift and Prior, and others, have been preserved

* Chesterfield's Characters.

among her papers, and were composed expressly for her friends.* It was during the Duchess's residence abroad that she is supposed by Dr. Coxe to have written her long letter in vindication of her general conduct to Mr. Hutchinson; from which unpublished document many facts in this work have been taken. But in 1788, a little book, called "Opinions of the Duchess of Marlborough," collected from her private papers, was printed, but not published, with a preface, and notes by an anonymous editor, known to be Sir John Dalrymple, afterwards Lord Hailes. These memoranda, for they scarcely deserve a more imposing name, were commenced in the year 1736, and terminated in 1741. They are undoubtedly genuine, and are written with a spirit and fearlessness which plainly speak their source.† The learned antiquary and eminent historian who collected and honoured them with a preface, was not an admirer of the high-spirited lady, upon whose political conduct he has commented unsparingly in his memorials of Great Britain. Yet he could scarcely have done more to place the Duchess on a footing with the many other female writers who have added to the stores of British literature, than in preserving, as the

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii.

† Granger's Biog. Hist. of Great Britain. Art. Jennings.

shadow of his name must preserve, these specimens of the occupations of her solitary hours.

The aversion of the Duchess to Sir Robert Walpole appears to have been the ruling passion of her mind. "I think," she writes, "'tis thought wrong to wish anybody dead, but I hope 'tis none to wish he may be hanged, for having brought to ruin so great a country as this." Yet she declares herself still partial to the Whig principles, observing, nevertheless, that both parties were much in fault; and the majority in both factions she calls by no milder term than "knaves," ready to join with each party for the sake of individual benefit, or for the purpose of carrying any particular measure.*

Like many other old persons, the Duchess viewed the world through the medium of a dark veil, which years and disappointments had interposed before her intellectual perceptions. The world was no longer the same world that it had been. Honour, patriotism, loyalty, had fled the country, and she, "though an ignorant old woman," as she called herself, could anticipate that national degradation begins with laxity of principle. She upheld stoutly the purity of former times, of that "well-intentioned ministry," of which Swift had successfully sapped the foundations. De-

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 179.

ceived by everybody, as she averred, and not able to depend upon a thing which she heard, she yet perceived that, as long as Walpole continued in power, the general demoralisation was progressing; and that he would continue in power until the Queen died, she was equally and mournfully certain.

The Duchess was not a character to sit still and complain, and her efforts to resist what she justly deemed the influence of a corrupt administration were earnest and laudable. She resolved, as she said, for the good of her country, that wherever she had an ascendency, the partisans of the hated minister should meet, in the elections, with a spirited resistance. It was in her power to procure the return or the rejection of any members that she pleased, in Woodstock and in St. Albans. On one occasion she managed to defeat an objectionable candidate, in a manner truly ingenious and characteristic. A certain Irish peer having put up at St. Albans, daring to brave her dislike to him and to his party, she took the following method to vanquish him. His lordship had formerly written and printed, at his own expense, a play. He had also offered it to the managers of one of the theatres, by whom it had been rejected. It was, however, circulated, but treated with so much contumacy by the

critics, that the peer bought it up; and some curiosity being excited upon the subject, the copies that remained dispersed became extremely valuable, and were sold for a guinea a piece. Expensive as they were, the Duchess resolved to collect all she could, even at that price. She was even at the expense of having a second edition printed, and hundreds of them given to the freemen of St. Albans, and people hired to cry them up and down the town whilst the election was going on. The result was, that the unfortunate nobleman lost his election, through the ridicule that was thus skilfully pointed at him with his own weapons.*

The Duchess at first hailed with delight the rising talents of Lord Carteret, whose disinterested and aspiring mind excited her lively admiration. Upon the motion of censure upon Sir Robert Walpole, made by Mr. Sandys, her hopes of the country revived, yet she dreaded lest the influence of the minister behind the throne might continue, after a "golden bridge" had been made for him to pass over to his unhonoured retirement. She lived to see Sir Robert Walpole driven to the very threshold of the Tower, and to learn that he had been compelled to the expedient, almost unparalleled in effrontery, of

* Life of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.

offering through the Bishop of Oxford a bribe to the Prince of Wales of fifty thousand pounds, to detach him from the party by whom he had been espoused. The indignant refusal of the Prince to accept of any conditions while Sir Robert Walpole remained at the head of affairs, completed the downfal of the despised, but still indefatigable minister. The Duchess had the mortification of seeing him, in spite of contempt, protected by the sovereign, and honoured by a peerage; and still more, of learning that he had succeeded by bribes and insinuations to corrupt and divide his foes, and to frustrate the scheme of his impeachment, the only proof of public honour that had been signalised for many years.*

Lord Carteret, her favourite, who had spoken against Walpole, in her grace's opinion, as well as man could, who had exerted against the minister the powers of what was, in the estimation of an incomparable judge,† the ablest head in England, was, with Mr. Sandys, the first to embrace the offers of a court, and to accept employments and honours, upon the condition that Walpole should remain unpunished. This the Duchess, in her own manner, foretold. She who knew courtiers and statesmen well, " was confi-

* Macauley. † Lord Chesterfield.

dent that there was nothing Sir Robert Walpole so much desired as to secure himself by a treaty of quitting with safety;" and "that there were some so desirous to have the power, that they would give him a golden bridge to go over; and that there would be a scheme to settle a ministry from which she could not believe that England would receive any good." Events proved the justness of this prediction.

It was not until two years before her death that the Duchess ventured to give to the world what she considered as a complete vindication of herself. When the work, entitled "An Account of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough, from her first coming to Court in the year 1710," was published, she was eighty-two years of age. Her conviction must have been that she could not live long; to life she had, according to her own statement, become indifferent, but she still cherished a desire for justification in the eyes of posterity. The charges alleged against her were avarice, insolence, and ingratitude to her royal mistress. Doubtful of her own powers of executing a complete and connected work, the Duchess selected as the nominal historian of her life, Nathaniel Hooke, best known as the compiler of a Roman history, and long the companion, and in some respects a dependent, of the

great and learned. Hooke had been a sufferer in the South Sea bubble, after which epidemic infatuation he described himself, in a letter to the Earl of Oxford, as in some measure happy to find himself at that time "just worth nothing;" that being considered, at the period in question, as an escape compared with the heavy burden of debts. The cause of the Duchess's preference to Hooke is not discoverable, since he was a Quietist and a Mystic, and had evinced the sincerity of his religious opinions by taking a Catholic priest to Pope on his deathbed, to the great annoyance of Bolingbroke.* The Duchess did not object to Hooke on that account, and gave him the large sum of five thousand pounds, on condition that he would aid her in her work. She would not, however, allow him to make use of all her letters, and they were, according to the historian's statement, sadly garbled at her grace's desire.† In the course of their mutual task, however, certain conversations arose, in which the Duchess perceived, or fancied she perceived, an intention on the part of Hooke to beguile her into popery. The result was a violent quarrel; but whether before or after the completion of the work does not appear.

* Biographical Dictionary.

† Manuscript Notes in the copy of the Duchess's Opinions in the British Museum.

Hooke, in extenuation of the quarrel, stated, on his own part, that finding her grace without religion, he had attempted to infuse into her mind his own opinions.

Whether this account be true or not, it is acknowledged that by the united efforts of the Duchess and the historian in her pay, a work was produced of singular power and interest. A reference to the passages from this curious narrative, quoted in this work, will prove the truth of the foregoing observation. The distinctness of the statements, the nervous simplicity of the language, and the fearlessness of the sentiments of the work, convey to the mind a conviction of the sincerity and conscious rectitude of the writer. No traces of mental decay are evident; but it is not difficult to perceive in the abrupt termination of some passages, the curtailing hand of some cautious critic, according to Horace Walpole, that of the historian.

No sooner did the "Account" appear, than it was attacked by various anonymous writers. The Duchess had compiled her work in the form of a letter, and a similar framework was adopted in the construction of several of the answers to her Vindication. It is remarkable that she addressed her justification to Lord Cholmondeley, the third Earl of that

name, the son-in-law of Sir Robert Walpole. The public eagerly perused the publication, yet it is said not to have made any considerable impression in favour of the Duchess at the time in which it appeared.

The "Vindication of her Conduct," as it is entitled, was not, however, the only work that the Duchess compiled in her own defence. Several of her manuscript narratives are now for the first time made serviceable in compiling this work. But there appears, from a passage in one of her letters to Mr. Scrope, to have been another book, which she showed only to a few confidential friends, and, among the number, to Mr. Scrope.

"I am going," she writes to him, "to make you a more unreasonable request than I ever have yet done, or I hope ever shall, which is, that you will give me one hour of your time to read the enclosed book, some time when you happen to have so much leisure, and send it me back when you have done with it; for though it is printed, I would not by accident have it made public. When I printed a letter to vindicate my own conduct, when I had the honour of serving Queen Anne, I thought it necessary to say something upon the subject of the enclosed book; but after it was done I thought it was better to show it to a few of my particular friends, because they were

so near relations that would be exposed by it, for all the facts are as well proved as what I think is possible you may have read in the accounts given of my honest endeavours to serve her Majesty Queen Anne; and as to all that relates to accounts, from your own office, you must know the relation is true."

To this communication Mr. Scrope replies, after, in his answer, referring to other matters, "I herewith return to your grace the book you were pleased to send me, which I read with an aching heart."*

Happily for her grace's fame, she was vindicated by one man of ability, Henry Fielding, whilst her traducers, except in one instance, were devoid of talents sufficient to bear down the testimony of her plain facts, or to weaken the effect of her shrewd arguments.† The Duchess was unfortunate in provoking the malignant wit of Horace Walpole, whose satire, couched in terms of playful gossip, like nauseous medicines in sweet syrup, has been spread far and wide in his universally popular works. Horace Walpole is

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 123.

† He conducted the paper called the "Champion." His sister Sarah, a literary character also, was the intimate friend of Dr. Hoadly. Possibly, from her name, she may have been a god-daughter of the Duchess.

an instance, that to be what Dr. Johnson calls a "good hater," it is not necessary to cherish the brooding enmities of a misanthropic retirement, in which the angry and vindictive passions are supposed to be fostered with propitious care. The only proof of attachment which he evinced to his family was his bitterness towards their foes, a bitterness indulged with all the rancour of a worldly man, who knows not the virtue of forbearance. His estimate of the Duchess's character is well known. He allows her not one good quality, and seems to experience a gratification such as fiends might betray, when, in a tone of exultation, he announces her death.

The dislike which the Duchess manifested for Sir Robert Walpole was attributed by his son to a base spirit of revenge. Among the few favourites whom she possessed among her relations, was Lady Diana Spencer, afterwards Duchess of Bedford. It became, according to Horace Walpole, a scheme of the Duchess of Marlborough to marry this young lady to Frederic Prince of Wales. She offered her to his royal highness with a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds. He accepted the proposal, and a day was fixed for the nuptials, which were to be solemnized secretly at the Lodge in the Great Park at Windsor; but Sir Robert Walpole gained intelligence

of the plot, and "the secret was buried in silence."*

In the gloom of the sick chamber, to which by the infirmities of old age she was frequently confined, the unbroken spirit of the Duchess showed itself still. "Old Marlborough is dying," writes Horace Walpole to his friend Sir Horace Mann; "but who can tell? Last year she had lain a great while ill, without speaking; her physicians said she must be blistered, or she would die; she called out, 'I won't be blistered, and I won't die.' If she takes the same resolution now, I don't believe she will."†

This passage forms a melancholy sequel to hints of infirmities, and reflections on approaching death, contained in the Duchess's Opinions. As on this subject the least reserved of our species are seldom disposed to converse, since the stranger knoweth not the heart, and "intermeddleth not" with its joys or sorrows, we may receive, as her genuine sentiments, the plaintive reflections of the feeble and declining Duchess, couched in such terms as these.

"It is impossible," she writes in 1737, "that one of my age and infirmities can live long; and one great happiness there is in death, that one

* Reminiscences, p. 308.

† Letters of Walpole, vol. i. p. 42.

shall never hear more of anything they do in this world."

In another passage, she expresses herself so weary of life, that "she cared not how soon the stroke was given, and wished only that it might be given with as little pain as possible."

Her grace's amusements became yearly more and more circumscribed. In former years she had occupied her shrewd and masculine mind with purchases of land, which she bought in the firm belief, or at least with the excuse of belief to her own mind, that a "sponge" might do away with all the funded property, and that land would "hold longest." It appears from her will that she was incessantly making additions to the immense landed property in which she possessed a life interest, and even went to the city herself, when nearly eighty years of age, to bid for Lord Yarmouth's estate. Her quarrels with Sir Robert Walpole began, as we have seen, upon the subject of "*trust-money*," and they seem to have hinged upon that same matter even so late as the year 1737.*

As the darkened day drew to its close, the poor Duchess was fain to be contented to amuse herself by writing in bed, in which shackled position much of her "Vindication" was penned by

* Private Correspondence. Life of the Duchess.

her.* She frequently spoke six hours a day, in giving directions to Hooke. Then she had recourse to a chamber-organ, the eight tunes of which she was obliged to think much better than going to an Italian opera, or an assembly.† Society seems to have afforded her little pleasure. Like most disappointed and discontented persons, she became attached to animals, especially to her three dogs, who had those virtues in which human beings, in her estimation, were so greatly deficient. Satiated with the world, the Duchess found, in the numerous visitants to Marlborough-house, few that were capable of friendship. Hers was not a mind to cull sweetness from the flowers which spring up amid the thorns of our destiny. She knew no enjoyment, she declared, equal to that accompanying a strong partiality to a certain individual, with the power of seeing the beloved object frequently; but she now found the generality of the world too disagreeable to feel any partiality strong enough to endear life to the decrepit being that she describes herself to have become.

The Duchess, during the latter years of her life, changed her residence frequently. Sometimes she remained at Marlborough-house, but

* Manuscript Notes to her Opinions.

† Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 168.

exchanged that central situation for the quiet of Windsor-lodge or of Wimbledon. Yet at Windsor-lodge she was tantalised with a view of gardens and parks which she could not enjoy; and Wimbledon, she discovered, after having laid out a vast sum of money on it, was damp, clayey, and, consequently, unhealthy.* Wrapped up in flannels, and carried about like a child, or wheeled up and down her rooms in a chair, the wealthy Duchess must, nevertheless, have experienced how little there was, in her vast possessions, that could atone for the infirmities of human nature.

A very few months before her death she requested an extension of the lease of Marlborough-house, the term of which had been extended in the reign of George the First. This residence had been built at the entire expense of the Duke of Marlborough, who had likewise paid Sir Richard Beelings two thousand pounds for what the Duchess calls a pretended claim which he had upon the land; so that she considered that she had as just a claim "to an extension as any tenant of the crown could have;" yet she deemed it prudent to make the application to government whilst Mr. Pelham was at the head of the Treasury, "he being the only person in that station who would oblige her, or to whom she

* Private Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 209.

would be obliged;" adding to this remark, that Mr. Pelham "had been very civil to her, and was the only person in employment who had been so for many years." The letter in which this petition was contained was written in June 1744, and the Duchess died in October. Such was the clearness of her faculties, and so strongly were her desires still fixed upon all the privileges which she thought she merited.

Had she been blessed with an exalting and practical faith, such a faith as elevates the heart, and chastens those angry passions and wilful discontents which embitter the dark valley of old age far more even than bodily suffering, the Duchess, looking around her upon those whom she had the power to bless, might have been happy. But, without by any means imputing to her that scepticism with which it was the fashion of the day to charge her, it must be allowed that there is no reason to suppose that the Duchess's path in life was illumined by those rays which guide the humble and practical Christian through the changes and chances of the world. Her views were all bounded to the scene before her: a spoiled child, the victim of prosperity, as well as its favourite, she received the bounties of Providence as if they had been her due, whilst she aggra-

vated its dispensations of pain by a murmuring spirit.*

In the midst of her unenjoyed wealth, some acts of charity employed her later days. Such persons as had fallen into decay, were never, if they bore good characters, repulsed by her.† Imposition of any kind she detected instantly, and exposed it in her own eccentric and fearless manner. Having, on one occasion, sent a costly suit of clothes to be made by a certain fashionable dress-maker, Mrs. Buda, the Duchess, on the dress being completed, missed some yards of the expensive material which she had sent. She discovered and punished the fraud in the following manner. Mrs. Buda had a diamond ring which she valued greatly, and wore frequently when attending the Duchess's orders. The Duchess pretended to be pleased with this ring, and begged a loan of it as a pattern. Having kept it some days, she sent it to Mrs. Buda's forewoman, with a message importing that it was to be shown to her, as a token between her grace and Mrs. Buda that a certain piece of cloth should be returned instead. The woman, knowing the ring, sent the Duchess the remnant of

* Coxe. Private Correspondence, &c.

† Life of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.

cloth which had been fraudulently kept by Mrs. Buda; upon which the Duchess sent for Mrs. Buda, and putting the ring into her hand, said, that since she had now recovered the cloth which had been stolen from her, Mrs. Buda should regain the ring which the Duchess had kept.*

As she grew older, the firm grasp with which she had ever endeavoured to hold her temporal possessions became more tenacious. She seems to have tired out the Treasury with frequent complaints respecting disputed points which concerned her office of Ranger of Windsor Park, and to have been wonderfully grateful to the powers that had the ascendant for civility to which for years she had been unaccustomed. "You have drawn this trouble upon yourself," she writes to Mr. Scrope, secretary to Mr. Pelham, "by a goodness I have not found in any body these many years."† And with corresponding humility she begs him to excuse the length of her letter, for, having none of her servants in the way, she found herself obliged to make use of a female secretary, who was not very correct;

* Life of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.

† The details of her grievances are to be found in the Appendix.

"but the hand," adds the poor old Duchess, "is plain enough to be read easily; the worst of it is, that it looks so frightfully long, that a man of business will turn it before he reads it."* Such was the subdued tone in which the Duchess, a year before her death, addressed the official whom in former days she would have commanded.

The vigour and clearness of intellect which had ever distinguished the Duchess, were spared to her until the last. Even in her letters to Mr. Scrope, written mostly in 1743, there is an exactness, distinctness, and force not often to be met with in female correspondence at an earlier age. Her letters on business, and she seems to have passed her days in writing them, are peculiarly clever; sufficiently explicit, but without a word too much. Throughout the Duchess's letters there is, notwithstanding the asperity of her general remarks, no appearance of discourtesy. In her correspondence with Mr. Scrope, she begins as if addressing a stranger, but, on perceiving that he to whom she wrote entered kindly into her concerns, she becomes gracious, then friendly, and, lastly, even confidential.

To her other concerns was added the charge of

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 123.

Windsor Park, and all the affairs contingent on that office, which the Duchess rendered, when she had nothing else to employ her, a source of irritation, and of occupation.

Queen Caroline, as we have seen, upon the refusal of the Duchess to sell some part of her property at Wimbledon to her Majesty, threatened to take away the annuity of six hundred pounds a year, coupled with the office of Ranger. The threat, to the disgrace of that eulogised Princess, was put into execution; and during Mr. Pelham's administration, and very shortly before her death, the Duchess applied, through Mr. Scrope, for the restitution of her salary. "Though," she says, "I have a right to the allowance, I have no remedy, since the crown will pay, or not pay, as they please." Her arguments for her claims are written with admirable clearness, but couched in terms of earnestness at which one cannot but smile, when we reflect that the writer, now upwards of eighty, who displayed such solicitude for the restitution of the sum of six hundred pounds yearly, not to talk of arrears, which she seems to think were hopeless, was in the receipt of an annual income of at least forty thousand pounds. But it was her right; and the pleasure, perhaps, of triumphing over the injustice of

Queen Caroline, then in her grave, moved her to exertion on this subject.

"I have a right," says this pattern of exactness, "by my grant, to five hundred pounds a year for making hay, (in Windsor Park,) buying it when the year is bad, paying all tradesmen's bills, keeping horses to carry the hay about to several lodges, and paying five keepers' wages at fifteen pounds a year each, and some gate-keepers, mole-catchers, and other expenses that I cannot think of. But as kings' parks are not to be kept as low as private people's, because they call themselves kings' servants, I really believe that I am out of pocket upon this account, besides the disadvantage of paying ready money every year for what is done, and have only long arrears to solicit for it."*

A more satisfactory and genial occupation, one would suppose, than wrangling for rights and sums of money which would soon be useless to her, might have occupied many of the Duchess's declining days. In the month of September, previous to her death, she describes herself as having entered into a "new business," which entertained her extremely; tying up great bundles of papers to assist very able historians to write a Life of

* Coxe MSS.

the Duke of Marlborough, which would occupy two folios, with the Appendix.

The arrangement of these papers seems to have afforded the Duchess considerable pleasure. Her feelings were rendered callous by age, and she could now peruse with a poignant regret the correspondence of her husband and of Godolphin. The Lord Treasurer, occupied and harassed as he always was, took no copies of his letters, but desired his friend to keep them, so that they had been carefully preserved, and amounted to two or three hundred in number.

Such materials, together with the minute accounts of all continental affairs, would form, the Duchess felt assured, "the most charming history that had ever yet been writ in any country; and I would rather," she adds, in a spirit with which all must sympathise, "if I were a man, have deserved to have such an account certified of me, as will be of the two lords that are mentioned, than have the greatest pension or estate settled upon me, that our own King, so full of justice and generosity, will give to reward the quick and great performances brought about by my Lord Carteret, and his partner the Earl of Bath."

With this reverence for the dead, and contempt for the living, the Duchess proceeded with

her task; observing, (then in her eighty-fourth year,) "that it was not likely that she should live to see a history of thirty or forty years finished."

As autumn approached, her strength seemed more and more to fail. In answer to Mr. Scrope's inquiries respecting her health, she replies, "I am a little better than I was yesterday, but in pain sometimes, and I have been able to hear some of the letters I told you of to-day; and I hope I shall live long enough to assist the historians with all the assistance they can want from me: I shall be contented when I have done all in my power. Whenever the stroke comes, I only pray that it may not be very painful, knowing that everybody must die; and I think that whatever the next world is, it must be better than this, at least to those that never did deceive any mortal. I am very glad that you like what I am doing, and though you seemed to laugh at my having vapours, I cannot help thinking you have them sometimes yourself, though you don't think it manly to complain. As I am of the simple sex, I say what I think without any disguise; and I pity you very much for what a man of sense and honesty must suffer from those sort of vermin, which I have told you I hate, and always avoid. I send you a copy

of a paper, which is all I have done yet with my historians. I have loads of papers in all my houses that I will gather together to inform them; and I am sure you will think that never any two men deserved so well from their country as the Duke of Marlborough and my Lord Godolphin did."

One of the last topics of courtly gossip which seems to have disturbed the Duchess's mind, was the quarrel between George the Second, his son, and the Princess of Wales, upon occasion of the Princess's sudden and hazardous removal from Hampton Court to St. James's, previous to the birth of his Majesty George the Third. The Duchess warmly espoused the part of the Prince and Princess, wished them well out of their difficulties, and esteemed Queen Caroline a very hard-hearted grandmother, because, instead of being mightily glad that the Princess's hour of trial was "well over," she was extremely angry with the Prince for not consulting the usual ceremonies on this momentous occasion.

Several charitable institutions perpetuate the Duchess's bounty, and the principal of these, the almshouses of St. Albans, was founded upon a scheme equally benevolent and judicious. It was intended for decayed gentlewomen, and until, for electioneering purposes, the character

of its inmates was changed, it retained its useful character of a respectable home and shelter for gentlewomen whose pecuniary circumstances rendered such an asylum desirable.

Several other anecdotes of her benevolence and generosity are recorded; among others, one of munificent generosity is supplied by the newspapers of the day. One of the firm of the Childs was oppressed, nearly to his ruin, by an opposition from the Bank. Upon this occasion, a member of the family stated his case to the Duchess of Marlborough, who placed the following order in his hand:—

"Pay the bearer the sum of one hundred thousand pounds.

"SARAH MARLBOROUGH.

"To the Governor and Company
of the Bank of England."

It is needless to state that the Bank dropped the quarrel; but their persecution made the fortune of the banker.

Until the beginning of October, 1744, the Duchess of Marlborough appears to have continued capable of transacting business; for we find, on the sixth of that month, a letter written

to her from Mr. Scrope, whom she had presented with her picture, begging for an interview with her grace; and in a previous letter he intimates that he has some message from Mr. Pelham to deliver to the Duchess. Thus, to the last, her concerns, those of Windsor Lodge, the renewal of the lease of Marlborough-house, and the more commendable, but too late deferred task of compiling the memoirs of her husband, engrossed her mind. What portion of her thoughts was given to the Maker who had sent her into the world endowed with singular faculties, who had entrusted her with many talents, for which soon she would be responsible to her God, does not appear. She sank, at length, to rest. Her death took place at Marlborough-house, on the 18th of October, 1744.*

The personal qualities of this remarkable woman require little comment; in the narrative of her life they are sufficiently displayed. The advantages with which nature qualified her to play a conspicuous part in society have been rarely combined in woman. Of extraordinary sagacity, improved alone by that species of education which the world gives, her mind displayed

* As her early and only biographer expresses it, at her house at the Friery, St. James's. Friery Passage was formerly close to Marlborough-house.

almost masculine energy to the latest period of her existence. Her judgment, though biassed by her passions, exemplified itself in the clear and able estimate which she made of the motives, opinions, and actions of her contemporaries. Time has proved the value of her observation.

To an extraordinary capacity for business, the Duchess of Marlborough united great facility in expressing, and in making others comprehend, all that she desired them to understand. From her earliest years, her mind soared above the pursuits of her young companions. The puerile recreations of a court could not shackle the vigorous intellect which disdained the captivity of etiquette. Compelled by circumstances to endure the society of a Princess whom she despised, her mind never sank to the level of that of the placid and unaspiring Anne. Even amidst the irksome duties of perpetual attendance on one who had little to recommend her except good nature, the grasping intellect of the youthful favourite was gaining opinions on topics generally connected with politics, and with such themes as affected her interest and that of her future husband. The capacity of Anne remained stationary; and that of her companion, amid similar occupations to those of her young mistress,

and enjoying only the same opportunities, like a plant entangled amongst others of slower growth, although shackled, yet acquired vigour.

With few opportunities of mental culture, except such as society offered her, with scarcely the rudiments of education, Sarah Duchess of Marlborough became, at an early age, the affianced wife of a man who was, like herself, practical, not erudite, the scholar of the world, the pupil of fortune. At the time of this early engagement, she probably possessed, along with the vivacity, the sweetness and attractions natural to her sex. The world, and a love of politics, that bane to delicacy and grace in woman, had not then hardened her nature, and increased the acrimony of her temper. She became the wife of Marlborough, the associate of his associates, the companion, the friend of the eloquent, of the lettered, and the brave. Her capacity grew in the congenial sphere now formed around her. Her observation, by nature accurate, was exercised upon subjects worthy of her inspection. She learned, by conversation, by experience, to think and to reason. For many years she took but a trivial share in the public events which agitated the nation; but she viewed from "the loophole of retreat" all that was important, with a mind enlightened by the sound and moderate opinions

of Godolphin, from whom she was, in fact, much more rarely separated than from her husband. The Lord Treasurer could never, indeed, teach her to love William the Third, who had graciously overlooked his defection; but he restrained her vehemence, he regulated her expressions; and it was not until Godolphin had sunk under the cruel disease which consumed him, that the Duchess became intractably violent. Thus, formed by circumstances into a reflecting, shrewd, and energetic being, the Duchess of Marlborough, when her mind attained, along with her frame, its full growth, and that lasting vigour for which both were remarkable, began to turn with disgust from the irksome duties which her offices at court imposed upon her unwilling mind. The daily round of ceremonials which she was compelled to witness became revolting to her; the monotony of Anne's mind inspired her with contempt. It was with difficulty, as she confessed years afterwards, that she brought herself to endure the society of one whose conversation consisted, like that of James her father, in a constant repetition of one favourite idea; a species of discourse far more dispiriting than absolute silence.

The imperious temper of Sarah was fostered by the meek disposition and mean understanding

of her royal mistress. As she grew into political importance, she probably ceased to be the engaging and attractive woman whose loveliness gained universal admiration. Henceforth, her empire, excepting with regard to her husband, appears to have been over the intellect alone; and whilst she was at once the pupil and the adviser of Godolphin, she was no longer beloved as a parent; her influence over the affections of those with whom she was connected melted away when politics absorbed her thoughts.

There can be no doubt but that, whilst the virtues of the Duchess were not many, her faults were egregiously exaggerated by contemporary writers. The principal accusations against her relate to avarice, ingratitude towards Anne, arrogance of demeanour, and a spirit of intrigue. The grounds upon which this formidable array of demerits rests, have been fully discussed in the foregoing portion of this work. That the Duchess was of a most grasping disposition, that she coveted money, thirsted for power, place, honour, everything that could raise her to a pinnacle in that world which she loved too well, cannot be denied. The attempts at peculation, and the corrupt and dishonest practices with which she has been charged, are, however, succinctly and satisfactorily disproved by her. Though greedy to an excess

of wealth, she was not dishonest. Queen Anne truly said that cheating was not the Duchess's crime; and no individual could be a more exact or competent judge than the Princess who uttered that sentence. It appears, indeed, that the Duchess endeavoured very diligently to reform the royal household; that she caused an order to be passed, prohibiting the sale of places; that she never exceeded, and, in some instances, refused the usual perquisites of her office; that, far from encroaching on royal bounty, she refused frequently large sums from the Queen when Princess; and that, after Anne's accession, the value of her presents to the Duchess was so contemptible that the latter, in her letter to Mr. Hutchinson, has given a list of them, which borders, from its meanness, on the absurd.

The conduct of the Duchess towards her sovereign has been, by party writers, severely stigmatised, and not without justice. There was, on both sides of this memorable quarrel, much to blame. A long course of arrogance, imprudence, and negligence, on the part of the Duchess, led to the alienation of Anne. Yet even the Queen specifically declared, and reiterated, that she had no fault to allege against the haughty Sarah, except "inveteracy to poor Masham." It was not in the Duchess's nature to check that

inveteracy. A generous, high-minded line of conduct was beyond her power. Yet, at any rate, the alleged cause of her disfavour was not a crime of heinous character. It was the mode in which she revenged the injuries which she received, that constitutes her delinquency. Her character of her royal mistress was written in the spirit of revenge; her pen was fledged with satire as it traced the lines in which the follies and defects of Anne are described. Years failed to soften the bitterness of her vindictive spirit. Death had not the power to disarm her rancour. The publication of certain letters, an act with which she frequently threatened the Queen;* the careful insertion in her narrative of every circumstance that can throw ridicule upon a mistress once her benefactress, one who descended from her high rank to claim the privileges of friendship: these are acts which must be heavily charged upon the Duchess. Age and affliction ought to have taught the relentless writer a better lesson. The Queen was no more—the Duchess tottering towards the tomb. Their mutual animosities should not by the survivor have been dragged forth to gratify revenge.

Such a breach of confidence, such an outrage

* Coxe MSS.

upon the sacred name of friendship, society ought not to pardon. Such an offence, of too frequent occurrence, where disgust has superseded confidence, renders affection a snare to be dreaded by the unsophisticated mind, and must entirely preclude those who hold offices of responsibility from the necessary relief of confidence; and, were such acts of treachery excused, monarchs might indeed tremble, before they indulged the amiable inclinations of minds not corrupted by the intoxicating possession of power.

The office which the Duchess held about the person of the Queen rendered silence an imperative claim of honour; but, with an unrelenting coarseness, the Duchess laid bare the very privacies of the closet, the foibles, the vacillations, the manœuvres, the weaknesses, the peculiarities of her sovereign. No self-justification could be worth such a price—revenge upon the memory of one silent in the grave.

As a wife and as a mother, the Duchess stands not pre-eminently high. She was born for the public, and to the public she was devoted. Her sentiments of patriotism, however commendable, would have been well exchanged for duty to her husband, and patient affection for her children. Her gross partiality to some of her grandchildren, in preference to others, revealed the source of her

misfortunes as a mother. Wherever such a noxious fungus as injustice grows within the domestic sphere, peace and affection take their leave. Hence those divisions which the possession of a large fortune in the hands of a family entails upon the junior branches, among whom there is not the foundation of a happy confidence. The precise sources of those irritating bickerings does not appear in the published correspondence relating to the domestic concerns of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough; but it is too probable that the miserable dissensions between his wife and daughters, which embittered the Duke's life, originated in jealousies on pecuniary matters.

In what is commonly termed purity of morals, the character of the Duchess of Marlborough has descended to posterity without a stain. Whatever direction the calumnies of the day may have taken in that respect, their influence was ephemeral. No historian of respectability has dared to attach a blemish to the purity of her lofty deportment. She esteemed the probity, and she was powerfully influenced by the sterling sense, of Lord Godolphin; but her attachment was in no degree greater than that of the Lord Treasurer's affectionate friend, her husband. No similar aspersion with respect to any other individual appears in the lampoons of the day. In a

moral sense, in so far as it comprises the purity of a woman's conduct, the Duchess is therefore unimpeached. She was in that respect worthy of being the wife of the great hero who worshipped her image in absence, with the romantic devotion of love, unabated even by indifference. But when we speak of female excellence, to that one all-important ingredient must be added others, without which a mother, a wife, and a friend, cannot be said to fulfil her vocation. Sweetness, forbearance, humanity, must grace that deportment, in the absence of which virtue extorts with difficulty her meed of praise. The lofty temper which could scarcely be restrained in the presence of the staid and decorous Queen Mary, expanded into acts of fury, when time and unlimited dominion over her sovereign and her husband had soured that impetuous spirit into arrogance.

In reviewing the long life whose annals we have written, it is not easy to point out the benefits which the Duchess conferred upon society. Endowed with natural abilities of a very uncommon order; with a person so remarkably beautiful, that it would have bestowed a species of distinction upon a female in a humble station; possessing a most vigorous constitution, which seemed destined to wear out, with impatience, her heirs and her enemies; raised to rank, her coffers

overflowing with wealth; she appeared marked out by destiny to effect some signal good for a country in whose concerns she took an active part. What distress might she not, with her enormous wealth, have relieved; what indigent genius might she not have brought forth to light; what aids to learning by endowments might she not have bestowed; what colleges might she not have assisted; what asylums for the miserable might she not have provided! Of these laudable undertakings, of intentions so beneficent, we find, compared with her enormous means, but few instances. There are some laudable endowments, some impulses of benevolence recorded, which make one hope that there may have been more, unseen, unknown. But a truly amiable mind would not have been solely occupied by what she deemed her claims and her wrongs; it would, when the fervour of the noon-day was over, have delighted in those kind acts which cheer the evening of life. To the last she was grasping, accumulating, arranging. To the world, in its worst sense, she gave up the powers of a mind destined for higher things. The immense accumulation of her wealth spoke volumes against the extension of her charity. To each of her heirs, Charles Duke of Marlborough, and to his brother, Lord John Spencer, she bequeathed a property of thirty

thousand a year, besides bequests to others, particularly enumerated in her singular will.*

But taking into account all the errors that she committed, and the good acts which she omitted, Sarah Duchess of Marlborough had still some noble qualities to command respect. Her hatred of falsehood stands foremost in bold relief among these attributes. Supposing that the great world of those days resembled, in its leading features, the luxurious and fashionable portion of the community in these, her sincerity was a virtue of rare occurrence. Her motives, her very foibles, were laid bare for the inspection of her associates. Her unadorned and accurate account of all those affairs in which the busy portion of her life was passed, was never attacked for untruth. She resolutely exposed all that she hated and despised; but she was equally averse to duplicity in her own personal conduct, and resentful towards it in others. Her plain dealing with the Queen, even her loss of temper and occasional insolence, rise high in estimation when contrasted with the vile duplicity of Mrs. Masham, and the servility and intriguing meanness of Harley. That she was not able to cope with such enemies as these, is to her credit. With her indignation at the stratagems by which

* See Appendix.

she was secretly undermined, we must cordially sympathise. There was something high-minded in her endeavours to prevent the Duke from ever taking office again; and in the last conditions to her will, that those who so largely benefited by it should forfeit their share if they ever took office under a monarch whom she disliked, and a ministry whom she despised. Her virtues, like her faults, were of the hardy order. There was nothing amiable in the Duchess's composition, to present her good qualities in fair keeping, or to render her an object for affectionate veneration in her old age. Her sincerity was ever too busy in unveiling the faults of others: it was unaccompanied by charity. Her resentments ended only with her existence.

The Duchess of Marlborough was interred in the sumptuous monument at Blenheim, in the chapel, in the same vault which contained the remains of the Duke, after they were removed thither from Westminster Abbey.

In the Duchess's will, which occupied eight skins of parchment, she ordered that her funeral should be strictly private, and with no more expense than decency required, and that mourning should only be given to those servants who should attend at her funeral.

She appointed Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and

Beversham Filmer, Esq., her executors, to whose charge she left in trust her almost countless manors, parsonages, rectories, advowsons, lands, tenements, and hereditaments, in no less than eleven counties.

By a proviso in her will, she rendered it void, as far as he was concerned, if ever her grandson Lord John Spencer should become bound or surety for any person, or should accept from any King or Queen, of these realms, any office or employment, civil or military, except the rangership of the Great or Little Park at Windsor. She left ample bequests to many of her servants, not forgetting twenty pounds a year to each of her chairmen. One of the most remarkable items of her codicil was the sum of ten thousand pounds to William Pitt, Esq., afterwards Earl of Chatham, for the noble defence he had made in support of the laws of England, and to prevent the ruin of his country. But the sum of twenty thousand pounds to Philip Earl of Chesterfield, accompanied by the bequest of her best and largest diamond ring, appears sadly disproportioned to the small sums which she bequeathed to near relations. Those who are desirous of further particulars can satisfy their curiosity by referring to the Appendix. The Duchess was said to have left, besides her numerous legacies, property to

the amount of sixty thousand pounds per annum to be divided amongst her two grandsons, Charles Duke of Marlborough, and his brother Lord John Spencer. It is remarkable that one clause in her will prohibits the marriage of any of her grandsons under the age of twenty-one, on penalty of losing the annuity bequeathed to them, and of having half of the proposed sum transferred to their wives.

In closing this narrative of a long life—this estimate of a remarkable person, it must be observed that many allowances are to be made for the errors and failings displayed by the individual whose character has been described. Her youth witnessed an age of self-indulgence, and of moral degradation: the period of her maturer years was marked by civil strife, and by the anarchy of faction. A perilous course of prosperity attended the middle period of her career. Disappointment, dissensions, calumny, misfortune, and neglect, commenced with her decline, and accompanied her slow decay, to the last moment of her existence. Those who hopelessly covet wealth, honour, and celebrity, may read the life of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough with profit, and rise from the perusal, resigned to fate.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

THE following letter is taken from the Coxe Manuscripts, vol. xv. p. 123. It is referred to by the Duchess, in her Account of her Conduct.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO THE QUEEN.

I have said something in answer to the letters I had the honour to receive last from your Majesty in one of these very long papers, and there remains nothing to observe more, but that your Majesty seems very much determined to have no more correspondence with me than as I am the Duke of Marlborough's wife, and your groom of the stole. I assure your Majesty I will obey that command, and never so much as presume, as long as I live, to name my cousin Abigail, if you will be pleased to write me word in a very short letter that you have read this history, which is as short as I could make it, and that you continue still of the same opinion you were as to all your unjust usage of me. You will know all I have writ is exactly the truth, and I must desire that you will be pleased to do this before you receive the holy sacrament; and my reason for it is this: everybody considers that as the most serious and important thing they have to do in the world; and in order to prepare themselves for it in such a manner as the greatness of the mistery requires, they are directed to take a strict account of their lives, and to be sorry for any wrong

thing they have done, and to resolve never more to do the same; and I know your Majesty on that occasion always observes the great rule of examining yourselfe, and, justly considering what a sacred work you are going about, constantly makes use of that opportunity to search and try your wayes, and take a solemn view of your actions. Now, upon the head of examination which I find in "The Whole Duty of Man," I observe there are these that follow Neglecting lovingly to admonish a friend; forsaking his friendship for a slight or no cause; unthankfulness to those that admonish, or being angry with them for it; neglecting to make what satisfaction we can for any injuries we have done him. And we are directed, in the same place, to read this catalogue carefully over, upon days of humiliation, and to ask our own hearts as we go along, Am I guilty or not of this? And when we are guilty, to confesse it, particularly to repent of it, and to make what amends we can, as the nature of the fault requires.

This rule is what I would beg your Majesty would be pleased to observe upon the four articles which I have now written exactly as they stand in that book, and upon the first to ask your own heart seriously whether you have ever told me of any fault but that of believing, as all the world does, that you have an intimacy with Mrs. Masham; and whether those shocking things you complain I have said, were any more than desiring you to love me better than her, and not to take away your confidence from me after more than twenty-five years' service and professions of friendship.

Upon the second, whether you have not forsaken my friendship upon slight or no faults?

Upon the third, whether you have ever taken well any kind advice that I have endeavoured to give you, but have been always angry at me for it?

Upon the fourth, whether you have attempted ever, by the least kind word, to make me any amends upon all

the just representations I have made of the wrong done me in the business of my office, in Mrs. Masham's using my lodgings, and all that you have said upon those occasions?

I beg your Majesty will be pleased to weigh these things attentively, not only with reference to friendship, but also to morality and religion; and that if ever I have said anything to you, of the truth of which you are not convinced, you will be so favourable to let me know what it is.

In the warning before the Communion, in the Common Prayer Book, we are enjoined so to search and examine our consciences that we may come holy and cleane to such a heavenly feast, and to reconcile ourselves, and make restitution to those that we have done the least injury to; and if we have given any reall cause of complaint, to acknowledge our fault, in order to regain the friendship of those we have used ill, and not to think it a disparagement to speak first, since 'tis no more than our duty; and I have read somewhere, that God himself does not forgive the injurys that are done to us, till we are satisfied and intercede for those that did them, who are afterwards obliged to make suitable returns by all offices of christian love and friendship. The Scripture itself does explain this matter in these words:—First be reconciled to thy brother, and then offer thy gift. The meaning can be no other but that if at any time we are going to receive, and remember that we have used any one ill, we should first endeavour to make satisfaction, it being but reasonable and just that whoever has done wrong should confess and acknowledge it, and to the utmost of his power make reparation for it. To this purpose I beg leave to transcribe a passage in Dr. Taylor. "He that comes to the holy sacrament must, before his coming, so repent of his injurys as to make actual restitution, for it is not fit for him to receive benefit from Christ's death, as long as by him his brother feels an injury; there is no repentance unless the penitent,

as much as he can, makes that to be undone which is done amiss, and therefore because the action can never be undone, at least undoe the mischiefe. Doe justice and judgement. That's repentance. Put thy neighbour, if thou canst, into the same state of good from whence by thy fault hee was removed,—at least, make that it should be no worse. Doe no new injury, and cut off the old. Restore him to his fame and his lost advantages."

And I beg leave to quote one other passage of the same author.

"Examine thyself in the particulars of thy relation, especially where thou governest and takest accounts of others, and exactest their faults, and art not so obnoxious to them as they are to thee; for princes and masters think more things are lawful to them towards their inferiors than indeed there are."

Upon the whole, it appears by the authority of this great man, that the first steps towards a reconcilliation should always be made by those that did the injury, and not by those that received it. On the first part, there should be shown some effects of repentance—some returns of kindness and friendship, and then it will be the duty of the other to remember it no more. This is as far as any one can go in this matter by the rules of justice. If anything I have written now, or at any time, appears to bee too familiar from a subject to a sovereign, I hope your Majesty will think it less wrong, if you consider its coming from Mrs. Freeman to Mrs. Morley, which names you so long obliged me to use that it is not easy for me now quite to forget them; and I still hope I have a better character in the world than Mrs. Masham tells your Majesty of inveteracy and malice, as I mentioned before, for I do not comprehend that one can be properly said to have malice or inveteracy for a viper, because one endeavours to hinder it from doing mischief: for I think when I know there is such an one, and do not acquaint you with it, I should fail in my duty,

and I can't see how that can be called being malicious. But since you make so ill returns for all the information which I have given you, which I know to be right from the dear-bought experience of that ungrateful woman, I will never mention her more, after I have had what I desire at the beginning of this, that you will say upon your word and honour that you have read these papers in the manner desired, and that you are not changed, though I wish you may not repent it and alter your opinion of this wretch, as you did of Mr. Harley, when it is too late: and I do assure your Majesty that I have not the least design of recovering what you say is so impossible (your kindness) in the letter of the twenty-sixth of October. What I have endeavoured is only with a view of your own safety and honour, and the preservation of the whole. I have but one request more, and then I have done for ever, upon the conditions I have written, and that is, that you will not burn my narratives, but lay them somewhere that you may see them a second time; because I know, sometime or other, before you die, if you are not now, you will be sensible how much you have wronged both yourself and me; but after you have read these papers and performed what Dr. Taylor recommends, whatever you write I will obey.

If I continue in your service, I will come to you noe oftener than just the business of my office requires, nor never speake to you one single word of anything else. And if I retire with the Duke of Marlborough, you may yet be surer that I will come no oftner than other subjects in that circumstance do.

1711.

A statement written by the Duchess of Marlborough relating to her removal from St. James's; respecting which many curious anecdotes had been circulated. Taken from the Coxe MS., vol. xv. p. 143.

I have given some account in a former paper of what the Queen said, when she desired Lord Marlborough's things should be removed out of St. James's, and of the way I took to make Mrs. Cowper tell the Queen that her lodgings were part of my grant, that, for her own case as well as mine, she might get for herself some rooms in St. James's, before they were all disposed of; and I think I have observed in that paper, how much civiller her Majesty's answer was upon this occasion than in the message the Duke of Shrewsbury reported to Mr. Craggs, when she ordered my lodgings to be cleared; which confirms me in my opinion that his grace did not speak to the Queen in the manner that he ought to have done, though he pretended to think her Majesty was in the wrong. But the answer I received from Mrs. Cowper was to this effect.

After I had desired her to acquaint the Queen with what I have said, she came to me the next morning and told me that her Majesty having been spoken to, was pleased to say, I would have you tell the Duchess of Marlborough, that I do know your lodgings are in her grant, *and I will be sure to give you some others before I go out of town.* It did not appear by this that the Queen was angry, as indeed she had no reason to be; and to show that Mrs. Cowper had no thoughts of that, she sent me a very civil message, a day or two before she went to Windsor, that she had often put the Queen in mind of giving her some lodgings, and her Majesty had always said she would do it, one day after the other, but it was to be hoped she would name them the

next day, being the last she should stay in town, and as soon as it was done, I should certainly have notice.

After this had passed, which I thought very void of offence, the next thing I heard was that my Lord Oxford having offered her Majesty a warrant to sign for money to go on with the building at Woodstock, she had refused it, saying, that she would not build a house for one that had pulled down and gutted hers, and taken away even the slabs out of the chymneys, and had lately sent a message by Mrs. Cowper, which she had reason to be angry at. This last is as I have mentioned it just now; and the other ground of offence is still more extraordinary, because her Majesty went herself through all those that were my rooms just before she left the town, and must therefore see with her own eyes that there was no one chymney piece, floor, or wainscote touched, but every thing in good order, and every room mended, and nothing removed but glasses and brass locks of my own bringing, and which I never heard that anybody left for those that came after them; nay, the very pannels over the doors and chimneys were whole, the pictures having been only hung upon the wainscote; yet her Majesty suffered my Lord Oxford to send Lord Marlborough word that he would endeavour to serve him, and get over this great offence as soon as he could, but that at present the Queen was inexorable. This he said to a friend of Lord Marlborough's, desiring he might be acquainted with it, making at the same time great professions, and wishing to hear of some good success, which he said would set all things right, and declaring how well he could live with Lord Marlborough; and when the person he spoke to represented the diffycultys Lord Marlborough was under, and complained of the libels that came out against him, My Lord Oxford replyed, that he must not mind them, and that he himself was called *rogue* every day in print, and knew who did it, yet he should live fairly with that person; adding, that the Examiner himself had been upon him

lately; which was so very ridiculous that it made me laugh, since it is certain that all the lyes in that paper are set about by himself. Now, whether he invented these last for the pleasure of telling them, and hurting me with Lord Marlborough, or for a pretence to get off from his promise of finishing Blenheim, I can't tell; but this I am sure of, that before he found out that excuse, he had lost the best season for the work, for this answer was given in the beginning of July, and if they had actually ordered money then, the winter would have come on so fast before stones and materials could have been got, that little or nothing could have been done. But as it was natural for me to endeavour to clear myself, when I know such a message had been sent to Lord Marlborough, and such lyes were made about myself, I made my servant write in my name to the housekeeper of St. James's, and desire he would examine all the lodgings, and send word in what condition he found them, that I might know whether my servants had observed my orders, which were to remove nothing but what is usual, and called by all people furniture. Upon this the housekeeper took with him the servant I sent with the letter, and after he had gone through all the lodgings, he sent me word that they were in very good order, and that the report of my having taken anything out of them that did not belong to me, was false and scandalous. Having received this account, I desired Mr. Craggs, who had been with me at St. Albans, where I then was, to go to the Lord Chamberlain, who was the proper officer to apply to upon such occasions, and to give him an account of what had been reported, and to desire that he would send somebody to examine the lodgings; but my Lord Chamberlain not being in town, Mr. Craggs went of himself to my Lord Oxford, and told him what misrepresentations had been made to her Majesty about the lodgings; to which he answered, that there could be none, since the Queen had viewed them herself, and had been much displeased at the taking away

the brass locks, which she believed *were mostly her own*; but as to the message by Mrs. Cowper, he knew nothing of it, only he understood it was something that had disturbed her Majesty. Mr. Craggs told him there was no message from me to the Queen, but only a discourse, that was very natural with Mrs. Cowper, and necessary to her getting some lodgings for herself, since those she had were in my grant, as her Majesty was pleased to say she knew they were; who made a very civil answer upon the subject of my conversation with Mrs. Cowper. It was some comfort, however, to find that all the outcry that was made about the chymnies and getting the lodgings were let fall, and ended only in her Majesty being angry at my taking away brass locks, which she only *thought were mostly her own*, and therefore was in some doubt whether they were not mine; but when so much disagreeable noise had been made about this matter, I thought it would be right to have the housekeeper of St. James's sign a paper to the same effect with what he had said; upon which I sent him such a one, which I desired him to sign for the justification of my servants, who had orders to remove nothing but furniture, and if he had any difficulty in doing it, I desired him to ask my Lord Chamberlain if he might not sign to what was the truth; and if it were not true, then he had but to show where my servants had done wrong, and I would punish them for it. The housekeeper at first was unwilling to give anything under his hand, notwithstanding what he had declared by word of mouth, and the message he had sent to me; but he was afraid, I suppose, of being put out of his place: yet upon my sending him the paper I mentioned just now, which was all true, and nothing but the fact, he signed it at last, though it was directly contrary to what my Lord of Oxford reported from the Queen, in which he said, *there could not possibly be any mistake, since her Majesty had been in the lodgings herself*; but, in the conclusion, his lordship was so good as to say he was sorry anything should happen to

put the Queen out of humour, and the best way was to say no more of it, for he had prevailed with her Majesty to sign a warrant for twenty thousand pounds to go on with Blenheim, and he would order weekly payments forthwith; but the same person that writ me this account, added, that his lordship's airs and grimaces upon this occasion were hard to represent, and that it was pretty difficult to make anything out of what he had said, or to guess what was the occasion of this quick turn, and so far I agree with him; yet if I had not taken so much pains to expose his lyes . . . . .

Soon after my Lord Oxford had made a merit to my Lord Marlborough of his having prevailed with the Queen to continue money for the building, I received a letter from abroad, dated the 26th of July, by which it appeared there was no hope that the French would give such a peace as even so bold a villain as my Lord Oxford durst accept, and therefore 'tis probable he ordered this money to delude Lord Marlborough, so far as to make him continue in the service for the sake of having that great work finished, since his lordship would have too many difficulties, when no peace could be had, to fall out quite with Lord Marlborough; and besides that, a whole year is lost.

I hear the money is to be paid in such little sums, if at all, that it looks like a design rather to keep still some hold of Lord Marlborough, rather than to do him any good; and for what concerns the Queen's part in this whole affair, there is nothing surer than that Lord Oxford and Mrs. Masham did first persuade her Majesty to stop the warrant, and afterwards instruct her in those fine reasons which she gave for doing it, for she has no invention of her own, as I have often told you; but then she makes up that defect by thorough industry, in getting by heart any lesson that is given to her; and though she would not therefore, of herself, have told all these storys about gutting of the lodgings, and pulling down the marble chymney pieces, nor ever intended to have stopt any money upon it, yet as soon as she heard

Mrs. Masham say it was wrong in me to presume to remove anything, she would not fail to echo to that, and to say that truly she believed the brass locks were *mostly her own*; and if by chance she had heard my Lord Oxford or Mrs. Masham say that I had taken anything else out of the lodgings which she knew to be still there, she would be so far from doing me justice, that she would have said anything they would have put into her mouth, to make that falsehood be believed; nor is it in her nature to make any reparation for injuries of this kind, nor to be sorry or ashamed for what she has done wrong at any time, but, on the contrary, to hate the persons she has prejudiced, especially if they endeavour to vindicate themselves, and by that, to put her in the wrong, or those that govern her.

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*Character of Queen Anne written by the Duchess, and inscribed on the statue at Blenheim.**

Queen Anne had a person very graceful and majestic; she was religious without affectation, and always meant well. Though she believed that King James had followed such counsells as endangered the religion and laws of her country, it was a great affliction to her to be forced to act against him even for security. Her journey to Nottingham was never concerted, but occasioned by the sudden great apprehensions she was under when the King returned from Salisbury.

That she was free from ambition, appeared from her easiness in letting King William be placed before her in the succession; which she thought more for her honour than to dispute who should wear first that crown that was taken from her father. That she was free from pride, appeared from her never insisting upon any one circumstance of grandeur more than when her family was established by

* Coxe MSS., vol. xv. p. 151.

King Charles the Second; though after the Revolution she was presumptive heir to the crown, and after the death of her sister was in the place of a Prince of Wales. Upon her accession to the throne the Civil List was not encreased, although that revenue, from accidents, and from avoiding too rigorous exactions, (as the Lord Treasurer Godolphin often said,) did not, one year with another, produce more than five hundred thousand pounds. Yet she paid many pensions granted in former reigns, which have since been thrown upon the publick. When a war was found necessary to secure Europe from the power of France, she contributed, for the ease of the people, in one year, out of her own revenue, a hundred thousand pounds. She gave likewise the first fruits to augment the provisions of the poorer clergy. For her own privy purse she allowed but twenty thousand pounds a year, (till a very few years before she died, when it was encreased to six and twenty thousand pounds,) which is much to her honour, because that is subject to no account. She was as frugal in another office, (which was likewise her private concern,) that of the robes, for in nine years she spent only thirty-two thousand and fifty pounds, including the coronation expense, as appears by the records in the Exchequer, where the accounts were passed.

She had never any expense of ostentation or vanity; but never refused charity when there was the least reason for it. She always paid the greatest respect imaginable to King William and Queen Mary. She was extremely well bred, and treated her chief ladies and servants as if they had been her equals. To all who approached her, her behaviour, decent and dignified, shewed condescension without art or manners, and maintained subordination without servility.

SARAH MARLBOROUGH.

1738.

Papers relating to Blenheim.

Description of the Buildings and Gardens at Woodstock.

LORD GODOLPHIN TO THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Woodstock, Sept. 25th, 1706.

Before I left Windsor, I writ to you so fully for two or three posts together, that I shall have nothing left to say from hence but of what belongs to this place.

The garden is already very fine, and in perfect shape; the turf all laid, and the first coat of the gravel; the greens high and thriving, and the hedges pretty well grown.

The building is so far advanced, that one may see perfectly how it will be when it is done. The side where you intend to live is the most forward part. My Lady Marlborough is extremely prying into, and has really not only found a great many errors, but very well mended such of them as could not stay for your decision. I am apt to think she has made Mr. Vanburgh a little† . . . but you will find both ease and comfort from it.

Lady Harriot and Wiligo have walked all about the garden this evening. I hope, when we do so again, we shall have the happiness of your company.

SIR J. VANBURGH TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.‡

(Extract.)

June 11, 1709.

Madam,—As to the main concern of the whole, madam, which is as to the expense of all, I will, as I writ your grace yesterday, prepare in a very little time a paper to lay before you that I hope will give you a great deal of

* Coxe MSS., vol. xli. p. 14. † Blank in manuscript.

‡ Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 28.

ease upon that subject, notwithstanding there is 134,000*l.* already paid. But I beg leave to set your grace right in one thing which I find you are misinformed in. The estimate given in was between ninety and a hundred thousand, and it was only for the house and two office wings next the great court; for the back courts, garden walls, court walls, bridges, gardens, plantations, and avenues were not in it, which I suppose nobody could imagine would come to less than as much more. Then there happened one great disappointment; the freestone in the park quarry not proving good, which, if it had been, would have saved fifty per cent. in that article. And besides this, the house was (since the estimate) resolved to be raised about six feet higher in the principal parts of it. And yet, after all, I don't question but to see your grace satisfied at last; for though the expense should something exceed my hopes, I am most fully assured it will fall vastly short of the least of your fears. And I believe, when the whole is done, both the Queen, yourself, and everybody (except your personal enemys) will easilyer forgive me laying out fifty thousand pounds too much, than if I had laid out a hundred thousand too little.

I am your Grace's most humble
And obedient servant,
J. VANBURGH.

SIR JOHN VANBURGH TO THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Oxford, Oct. 3, 1710.

My Lord Duke,—By last post I gave your grace an account from Blenheim, in what condition the building was, how near a close of this year's work, and how happy it was that after being carried up in so very dry a season, it was like to be covered before any wet fell upon it to soak the

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 56.

walls. My intention was to stay there till I saw it effectually done; the great arch of the bridge likewise compleated and safe covered, and the centers struck from under it. But this morning Joynes and Robart told me they had read a letter from the Duchess of Marlborough to put a stop at once to all sorts of work till your grace came over, not suffering one man to be employed a day longer. I told them there was nothing more now to do in effect but just what was necessary towards covering and securing the work, which would be done in a week or ten days, and that there was so absolute a necessity for it, that to leave off without it would expose the whole summer's work to unspeakable mischiefs: that there was likewise another reason not to discharge all the people thus at one stroke together, which was, that though the principal workmen that work by the great, such as masons, carpenters, &c., would perhaps have regard to the promises made them that they should lose nothing, and so not be disorderly; yet the labourers, carters, and other country people, who used to be regularly paid, but were now in arrear, finding themselves disbanded in so surprising a manner without a farthing, would certainly conclude their money lost, and finding themselves distressed by what they owed to the people where they lodged, &c., and numbers of them having their familys and homes at great distances in other countys, 'twas very much to be feared such a general meeting might happen, that the building might feel the effects of it; which I told them I the more apprehended, knowing there were people not far off who would be glad to put 'em upon it; and that they themselves, as well I, had for some days past observed 'em grown very insolent, and in appearance kept from meeting, only by the assurances we gave them from one day to another that money was coming. But all I had to say was cut short by Mr. Joynes's shewing me a postscript my Lady Duchess had added to her letter, forbidding any regard to whatever I might say or do.

Your grace won't blame me if, ashamed to continue there any longer on such a foot, as well as seeing it was not in my power to do your grace any farther service, I immediately came away.

I send this letter from hence, not to lose a post, that your grace may have as early information as I can give you of this matter; *which I am little otherwise concerned at, than as I fear it must give you some uneasyness.* I shall be very glad to hear no mischief does happen on this method of proceeding; but 'tis certain so small a sum as six or seven hundred pounds to have paid off the poor labourers, &c., would have prevented it; and I had prevailed with the undertakers not to give over till the whole work was covered safe.

I shall, notwithstanding all this cruel usage from the Duchess of Marlborough, receive, and with pleasure obey, any commands your grace may please to lay upon me; being with the defference I ever was,

Your Grace's most humble
And most obedient servant,
J. VANBURGH.

SIR JOHN VANBURGH TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Extract from a Letter, dated Blenheim, July 27, 1716.

* * * * * *

And I hope you will, in almost every article of the estimate for finishing this great design, find the expense less than is there allowed. Even that frightful bridge will, I believe, at last be kindlier looked upon, if it be found (instead of twelve thousand pounds more) not to cost above three; and I will venture my whole prophetic skill in this one point, that if I lived to see that extravagant project compleat, I shall have the satisfaction to see your grace

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 127.

fonder of it than of any part whatsoever of the house, gardens, or park. I don't speak of the magnificence of it, but of the agreeableness, which I do assure you, madam, has had the first place in my thoughts and contrivance about it: which I have said little of hitherto, because I know it won't be understood till 'tis seen, and then everybody will say, *'twas the best money laid out in the whole design. And if at last* there is a house found in that bridge, *your grace will go and live in it.*

A Letter respecting a Suit in Chancery, which one Gardiner had commenced against her.

(This probably relates to the expenses of Blenheim. Supplied by W. Upcott, Esq.)

Marlborough-house, the 9th of July, 1712.

Sir,—I thank you for your letter which I received yesterday, which makes me have a mind to tell you what perhaps you may not have heard concerning Gardiner, who has acted, I think, with as much folly as knavery. You must have heard, I don't doubt, that he began his suit in chancery with a charge upon me of nothing but lies, which I am told the law allows of, as a thing of custom. I was always pressing to have it come to a conclusion; but a thousand tricks were plaid for him to delay it; and at last, when they could hold out no longer, he begun a suit at common law. The court would not suffer a suit for the same in two courts, so he was obliged to make his election which court he would choose, and he chose the Exchequer. I thank you for your civil offer of being ready to do me any service; but my cause is so good and so strongly attested, that I have no occasion for anything more than I have already. But I have a curiosity to know whether Gardiner did subpœna you to be a witness, because I have

never yet known him tell the truth in anything, and what he has lately done seems very extraordinary. In the first place, he made an excuse to my lawyer for having delayed the hearing, but said it should come on in Mic. Term, and yet, immediately after that, surprised him with a notice of trial for to-morrow. Some of my witnesses being nearly eighty miles off, it was a very difficult thing for me to bring them on so short a notice. However, I did compass it; but while the master was striking a special jury, Gardiner countermanded it. However the master finished it; and Gardiner's reason for countermanding it was, because he said his witnesses had disappointed him. I don't care what they do. And what he will do next I cannot guess; but I think he must pay considerable costs, not having given notice time enough to prevent my witnesses coming to London; for he countermanded the trial last Monday night, which was to be on Friday following, and Dr. Farrar came to London on Tuesday.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

S. MARLBOROUGH.

Correspondence relative to the destruction of the old Manor of Woodstocke.

SIR JOHN VANBURGH TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Thursday, June the 9th, 1709.

Madam,—Whilst I was last at Blenheim I set men on to take down the ruins at the old manor, as was directed; but bid them take down the chapell last, because I was preparing a little picture of what had been in general proposed to be done with the descent from the avenue to the bridge, and the rest of the ground on that side, which I

* Coxe MSS., vol xli. p. 25.

feared was not perfectly understood by any explanation I had been able to make of it by words. This picture is now done, and if your grace will give me leave, I should be glad to wait upon you with it, either this morning, or some time before the post goes out to-night; for if you should be of opinion to suspend any part of what they are now executing, I doubt the order would be too late if deffered till Saturday.

I hope your grace will not be angry with me for giving you this one (and last) moment's trouble more about this unlucky thing, since I have no design by it to press or teaze you with a word; but only in silent paint to lay before and explain to you what I fear I have not done by other means, and so resign it to your owne judgment and determination, without your ever hearing one word more about it from

Your Grace's
Most obedient humble servant,
J. VANBURGH.

SIR J. VANBURGH TO LORD GODOLPHIN.*

(*Extract.*)

Your Lordship will, I hope, pardon me if I take this occasion to mention one word of the old mannor.

I have heard your Lordship has been told there has been three thousand pounds laid out upon it; but upon examining into that account, I find I was not mistaken in what I believed the charge had been, which does not yet amount to eleven hundred pounds, nor did there want above two more to complete all that was intended to be done, and the planting and levelling included. And I believe it will be found that this was by one thousand pounds the cheapest way that could be

* Coxe MSS., vol xlvi. p. 24.

thought on to manage that hill, so as not to be a fault in the approach. I am very doubtful whether your Lordship (or indeed my Lord Duke) has yet rightly taken the design of forming that side of the valley, where several irregular things are to have such a regard to one another, that I much fear the effects of so quick a sentence as has happened to pass upon the remains of the manour. I have, however, taken a good deal of it down, but before 'tis gone too far, I will desire your Lordship will give yourself the trouble of looking upon a picture I have made of it, which will at one view explain the whole design, much better than a thousand words. I'll wait upon your Lordship with it as soon as I come to town, and hope in the mean time it won't be possible that the pains I take in this particular, should be thought to proceed only from a desire of procuring myself an agreeable lodging. I do assure your Lordship that I have acted in this whole business upon a much more generous principle, and am much discouraged to find I can be suspected of so poor a contrivance for so worthless a thing; but I hope the close of this work will set me right in the opinion of those that have been pleased to employ me in it.

I am

Your Lordship's, &c.

J. VANBURGH.

(Endorsed thus by the Duchess.)

Nov. 9.

All that Sir J. V. says in this letter is false. The manour house had cost me three thousand pounds, and was ordered to be pulled down, and the materialls made use of for things that were necessary to be done. The picture he sent to prevent this was false. My Lord Treasurer went to Blenheim to see the trick: . . . . . and it is now ordered to be pulled down.

*Reasons offered for preserving some part of the Old Manor, by Sir J. Vanburgh.**

June 11, 1709.

There is, perhaps, no one thing which the most polite part of manhood have more universally agreed in, than the vallue they have ever set upon the remains of distant times: nor amongst the several kinds of those antiquitys are there any so much regarded as those of buildings; some for their magnificence and curious workmanship; and others as they move more lovely and pleasing reflections (than history without their aid can do) on the persons who have inherited them, on the remarkable things which have been transacted in them, or the extraordinary occasions of erecting them. *As I believe it cannot be doubted, but if travellers many ages hence shall be shewn the very house in which so great a man dwelt, as they will then read the Duke of Marlborough in story; and that they shall be told it was not only his favourite habitation, but was erected for him by the bounty of the Queen, and with the approbation of the people, as a monument of the greatest services and honours that any subject had ever done his country—I believe, though they may not find art enough in the builder to make them admire the beauty of the fabric, they will find wonder enough in the story to make 'em pleased with the sight of it.*

I hope I may be forgiven if I make some slight application of what I say of Blenheim, to the small remain of Woodstock manor. It can't indeed be said it was erected upon so noble or so justifiable an occasion; but it was raised by one of the bravest and most warlike of the English kings; and though it has not been famed as a monument of his arms, *it has been tenderly regarded as the*

* Coxe MSS., vol. xli. p. 31.

scene of his affections. Nor amongst the multitude of *people who came daily to view what is raising to the memory of the great Battle of Blenheim, are there any that do not run eagerly to see what ancient remains may be found of Rosamond's Bower. It may, perhaps, be worth some little reflection upon what may be said, if the very footsteps of it are no more to be found.*

But if the historical argument stands in need of assistance, there is still much to be said upon other considerations.

That part of the park which is seen from the north front of the new building has little variety of objects, nor does the country beyond it afford any of value. It therefore stands in need of all the helps that can be given, which are only five; buildings and plantations—those indeed, rightly disposed, will supply all the wants of nature in that place: and the most agreeable disposition is to mix them, which this old manour *gives so happy an occasion* for, that were the enclosure filled with trees, principally fine yews and hollys, promiscuously set to grow up in a wild thicket, so that all the building left, which is only the habitable part, and the chapel, might appear in two risings amongst them, it would make one of the most agreeable objects that the best of landskip painters cou'd invent. And if, on the contrary, this building is taken away, there remains nothing but an irregular, ragged, and ungovernable hill, the deformitys of which are not to be cured but at a vast expense; *and that at last will only remove an ill object, and not produce a good one.* Whereas, to finish the present wall for the inclosures, to form the slopes and make the plantation, (which is all that is now wanting to complete the design,) wou'd not cost two hundred pounds.

I take the liberty to offer this paper, with a picture to explain what I endeavour to describe, that if the present direction for destroying the building shou'd hereafter happen to be repented of, I may not be blamed for neglecting

to set in the truest light I cou'd, a thing that seemed to me at least so very materiall.

J. VANBURGH.

Remarks upon this Letter by the Duchess.

The enclosed paper* was wrote by Mr. Robard, who lived always at Blenheim, and, as I have said, was taken into Mr. Bolter's place. He wrote these directions from the Duke of Marlborough's own mouth. And when he was gone, for fear of any contest, I suppose, in which he must disobey my Lord Marlborough's orders, or disoblige Sir John Vanburgh, he brought it to me, and I wrote what you see under the instructions, which anybody would have thought might have put an end to all manner of expense upon that place. The occasion of the Duke of Marlborough's giving these orders was as follows:—

Sir John Vanburgh having a great desire to employ his fancy in fitting up this extraordinary place, had laid out above two thousand pounds upon it, which may yet be seen in the books of accounts; and without being at all seen in the house, excepting in one article for the lead, which I believe is a good deal more than a thousand pounds of the money. Mr. Traverse, who calls himself the superintendent and chief of Blenheim works, let this thing go on (I will not call it a whim because there has been such a struggle about it) till it was a habitation; and then he came and complained of the great expense of it to me, desiring me to stop it; and Sir John having another house in the park where he lived, and where he had made some expense, Mr. Traverse was unwilling to think he designed this other for his own use, and very prudently wrote to my Lord Marlborough into Flanders, to ask for this old manour for himself, he having no place for the dispatch of his great busi-

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 29.

ness in carrying on these great works. The Duke of Marlborough made no answer, but when he came into England, I remember upon a representation that these ruins must come down, because they were not in themselves a very agreeable sight, but they happened to stand very near the middle of the front of this very fine castle of Blenheim, and is in the way of the prospect down the great avenue, for which a bridge of so vast an expense is made to go into. Upon this the Duke of Marlborough went down to Blenheim, and there was a great consultation held, whether these ruins should stand or fall; and I remember the late Earl of Godolphin said, that could no more be a dispute than whether a man that had a great wen upon his cheek would not have it cut off if he could. And upon hearing all people's opinion, and the Duke of Marlborough seeing the thing himself, he gave this paper of directions, which prevented anything more from being done upon the ruins; but it had not the intended effect of pulling them down.

In August third, 1716, when I was at the Bath, Mr. Bobart wrote to me that Sir John Vanburgh had ordered some walling about the old manour to plant some fruit-trees upon, which he would pay for. This, I suppose, was to save himself, because of the orders he had to do nothing there; and by the advance of what is done at that place, I believe it must have been begun a good while before I had this notice of it. I am sure it was upon the nineteenth of June, which was never mentioned by Sir John either to Lord Marlborough or to me. I thought this a little odd, but I had so great a mind to comply with Sir John, (if it were possible,) that I took no notice of this, nor wrote any to Mr. Robart concerning it, only that I was sure the Duke of Marlborough would never let Sir John pay for anything in his park, and I heard no more of it till I came here; only that I observed that several officers and

people that had come by Blenheim to the Bath, when they talked of this place, and of the workmen that were employed about it, could hardly keep from laughing.

Since Sir John went to London, the Duke of Marlborough and I, taking the air, went to see these works, where there is a wall begun; I wish my park or some of my gardens had such another; the first having none but what you may kick down with your foot, nor the fine garden but what must be pulled down again, being done with a stone that the undertakers must know would not hold; but it was not their business to finish, but rather to intail work. If one may judge of the expense of this place by the manner of doing things at Blenheim, there is a foundation laid for a good round sum. There is a wall to be carried round a great piece of ground, and a good length of it done, with a walk ten feet broad that is to go on the outside of this wall on the garden side, which must have another wall to enclose it. There are to be fruit-trees set, but the earth not being proper for that, it is to be laid I know not how many feet deep with stone, and then as much earth brought to be put upon that, to secure good fruit. And there is one great hole that I saw in the park that must be filled up again, already occasioned by making mortar for that part of the wall that is already done. What I have wrote, I saw myself, and upon my commending the fancy of it, the man was so pleased at my liking it, who lives in the house, and has some care of the works about the causeway, that he told me with great pleasure the whole design.

Correspondence between the Duchess of Marlborough and Sir John Vanburgh on the subject of a Marriage between the Lady Harriot Godolphin and the Duke of Newcastle.

SIR JOHN VANBURGH TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

January 16, 1714.

Madam,—Sir Samuel Garth mentioning something yesterday of Lord Clare with relation to my Lady Harriot, made me reflect that your grace might possibly think (by my never saying anything to you of that matter since you did me the honour of hinting it to me) I had either forgot or neglected it: but I have done neither. 'Tis true, that partly by company being in the way, and partly by his illness when I was most with him, I have not yet had an opportunity of sounding him to the purpose. What I have yet done, therefore, has only been this,—I have brought into discourse the characters of several women, that I might have a natural occasion to bring in hers, which I have then dwelt a little upon, and, in the best manner I could, distinguished her from the others. This I have taken three or four occasions to do, without the least appearance of having any view in it, thinking the rightest thing I could do would be to possess him with a good impression of her before I hinted at anything more. I can give your grace no further accounts of the effect of it, than that he seemed to allow of the merit I gave her; though I must own he once expressed it with something joined which I did not like, though it showed he was convinced of those fine qualifications I had mentioned; and that was a sort of wish (expressed in a very gentle manner) that her bodily perfections had been up to those I described of her mind and understanding. I

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 76.

said to that, that though I did not believe she would ever have a beautiful face, I could plainly see it would prove a very agreeable one, which I thought was infinitely more valuable; especially since I saw one thing in her, which would contribute much to the making it so, which was, that we call a good countenance, than which I ever thought no one expression in a face was more engaging. I said further, that her shape and figure in general would be perfectly well; and that I would pawne all my skill, (which had used to be a good deal employed in these kind of observations,) that in two years time no woman in town would be better liked. He did not in the least contradict what I said, but allowed I might very probably be right.

Your grace may depend upon me that I will neglect nothing I can do in this thing, for I am truly and sincerely of opinion that if I coud be an instrument in bringing it about, I shoud do my Lord Clare as great a piece of service as my Lady Harriott.

I am your Grace's
Most humble and obedient Servant,
J. VANBURGH.

SIR J. VANBURGH TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Whitehall, Nov. 6, 1716.

Madam,—When I came to town from Blenheim, I received a letter from the Duke of Newcastle out of Sussex, that he wou'd in a day or two be at Claremont, and wanted very much to talk with me. But I, having engaged to Mr. Walpole to follow him into Norfolk, cou'd not stay to see him then. At my return from Mr. Walpole's, which was Friday last, I found another letter from the Duke, that he was at Claremont, and deferred returning back to Sussex till he could see me; so I went down to him yesterday.

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 68.

He told me the business he had with me was to know if anything more had passed on the subject he writ to me at Scarborough, relating to Lady H., and what discourse might have happened with your grace upon it at Blenheim. I told him you had not mentioned one word of it to me. He said that was mighty strange, for you had talked with Mr. Walters upon it at the Bath, and writ to him since, in such a manner as had put him upon endeavouring to bring about a direct negotiation. *He then told me, that before he cou'd come to a resolution of embarking in any treaty, he had waited for an opportunity of discoursing with me* once more upon the qualities and conditions of Lady H. For that, as I knew his whole views in marriage, and that he had hopes of some other satisfaction in it than many people troubled themselves about, I might judge what a terrible disappointment he should be under, if he found himself tied for life to a woman not capable of being a usefull and faithful friend, as well as an agreeable companion. That what I had often said to him of Lady H., in that respect, had left a strong impression with him; but it being of so high a consequence to him not to be deceived in this great point, on which the happiness of his life wou'd turn, he had desired to discourse with me again upon it, in the most serious manner, being of opinion (as he was pleased to say) that I cou'd give him a righter character of her than any other friend or acquaintance he had in the world: and that he was fully persuaded, that whatever good wishes I might have for her, or regards to my Lord Marlborough and his family, I wou'd be content with doing her justice, without exceeding in her character, so as to lead him into an opinion now, which, by a disappointment hereafter, (should he marry her) wou'd make him the unhappiest man in the world.

He then desired to know, in particular, what account I might have heard of her behaviour at the Bath; and what new observations I might myself have made of her at Blen-

heim; both as to her person, behaviour, sense, temper, and many other very new inquiries. It wou'd be too long to repeat to your grace what my answers were to him. It will be sufficient to acquaint you, that I think I have left him a disposition to prefer her to all other women.

When he had done with me on these personal considerations, he called Mr. Walters (who was there) into the room, and acquainted him with what had passed with your grace through me at several times, and then spoke his sentiments as to fortune, which Mr. Walters intends to give your grace an account of; so I need not.

And now, madam, your grace must give me leave to end my letter by telling you, that if the Duke of Newcastle was surprised to find you had said so much to Mr. Walters at the Bath, and nothing to me on the subject at Blenheim, I was no less surprised than he, after the honour you had done me of opening your first thoughts of it to me, and giving me leave to make several steps about it to his friends and relations, as well as to take such a part with himself as you seemed to think might probably the most contribute towards disposing his inclinations the way you wished them.

I don't say this, madam, to court being further employed in this matter, for matchmaking is a damned trade, and I never was fond of meddling with other people's affairs. But as in this, on your own motion, and at your own desire, I had taken a good deal of very hearty pains to serve you, and I think with a view of good success, I cannot but wonder (*though not be sorry*) you should not think it right to continue your commands upon

Your obedient, humble Servant,

J. VANBURGH.

LETTER FROM THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO SIR JOHN VANBURGH.*

Woodstock, Thursday night.

I am sure nobody can be more surprised at anything than I am with your letter of the sixth of this month, in which you seem to think I have proceeded in a very extraordinary manner concerning Mr. Walter. I will therefore go back to the very beginning of the negotiation, that you or anybody else may be able to judge whether there is any ground for the reproaches which you have made me.

Some time after I came from Antwerp, having a great mind to dispose of Lady Hariot well, and knowing that you had opportunityof speaking to the Duke of Newcastle, I desired your help in that affair, if you found he would marry, and were persuaded, as I was, that he could not find a young woman in all respects that was more likely to make him happy than she is, for I never imagined that you would endeavour to serve me upon any other account. This you engaged in very readily, and I thought myself much obliged to you for it, and I shall always be thankful for any good offices upon that subject, though 'tis no more than justice and speaking the truth. After the conversation, you may remember that I allowed you to say that you knew my mind in this concern, and you said you would speak to Mr. Walpole; but we agreed that you should manage it in such a manner as not to give the Duke of Newcastle the uneasiness of sending any message to me, in case he did not like the proposal. Some time after this, you came to me, and gave me an account of your conversation with Mr. Walpole, in which there were some civil things said as to the alliance, but at the same time you said, what they expected for her fortune was forty thousand pounds; and from that time till you wrote to me from Scar-

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvi. p. 142.

borough, I never spoke to anybody of this matter, nor so much as thought of it; for I concluded that the Duke of Newcastle or his friends thought that great demand the most effectual way of putting an end to my proposal, since Lady Harriot is not a citizen nor a monster, and I never heard of such a fortune in any other case, unless now and then, when it happens that there is but one child. After this I had the most considerable offer made me that is in this country, and, considering all things, I believe, as to wealth, as great a match as the Duke of Newcastle, and in a very valuable family; but to show that money is not the chief point, this match was refused, where I could have had my own conditions; and I had not then the least imagination that I should hear any more of what I am now writing of. But when I was at the Bath, you gave me an account of a letter you had from the Duke of Newcastle, which lookt as if he wanted to hear something more from you concerning Lady Harriot: and upon that I writ to you, that I was not so much at liberty as I had been to give her a portion when I first proposed this match, having many other children that were so unhappy as to want my help; but that I still liked it so well that there was nobody who I could imagine had power with the Duke of Marlborough that I would not endeavour to make them use it in compassing this thing, which I thought so very agreeable; and some other reasons I gave, which ought to induce my Lord Marlborough to come into it; which you approved of entirely in your answer to this letter, and concluded by giving me an expectation of hearing from you when you had heard from the Duke of Newcastle, or rather when you had seen him, for you repeated something of his having desired you to cast an eye upon some of his houses in your way home; but from that time till your letter of the sixth of November, though you were here some days, you never writ a word of this matter, nor mentioned it to me. And I think it was your turn to speak, after what I had written;

and not at all reasonable for you to find fault with what passed between Mr. Walter and me at the Bath. I never saw him in my life before I was there; but upon his giving me an occasion, it was not very unnatural, and not unreasonable, I think, in me to own how much I wished an alliance with the Duke of Newcastle. He professed a great value and respect for him, seemed to think this match, as you did, as good for him as for anybody else; and since you left Blenheim, he writes to me upon that subject, but not what you mention of letting me know the Duke of Newcastle's sentiments as to the fortune; but he said something civil from the Duke of Newcastle, and deferred the rest till we met in town, thinking it was better to speak than to write of such matters.

This letter I answered in my usual way, professing all the satisfaction imaginable in the thing, if it should happen to succeed, (which, by the way, I have not thought a great while that it will). I have now given a very true relation of this whole proceeding, and if any third person will say that I have done anything wrong to you in it, I shall be very sorry for it, and very ready to ask your pardon; but at present I have the ease and satisfaction to believe that there is no sort of cause for your complaint against

Your most humble Servant,

S. MARLBOROUGH.

I have two letters of yours concerning the building of this place, which I will not trouble you to answer after so long a letter as this; besides, after the tryal which I made when you were last here, 'tis plain that we can never agree upon that matter.

Upon the receiving that very insolent letter upon the eighth of the same month, 'tis easy to imagine that I wished to have had the civility I expressed in this letter back again, and was very sorry I had fouled my fingers in writing to such a fellow.

*Explanatory Letter from Sir John Vanburgh, concerning his disagreement with the Duchess of Marlborough.**

The Duke of Marlborough being pleased, some time since, to let me know by the Duke of Newcastle he took notice he had never once seen me since he came from Blenheim, I was surprised to find he was not acquainted with the cause why I had not continued to wait on him as I used to do; and I writ him a letter upon it, in which I did not trouble him with particulars, but said I wou'd beg the favour of your lordship, when you came to town, to speak to him on that occasion.

And since your lordship gave me leave to take this liberty with you, I will make the trouble as little as I can, both to yourself and to the Duke of Marlborough, by as short an account as possible of what has happened since his grace's return to England, in two things I have had the honour to be employed in for his service, purely by his own and my Lady Duchess's commands, without my applying or seeking for either, or ever having made any advantage by them. I mean, *the building of Blenheim*, and *the match with the Duke of Newcastle.*

As to the former, as soon as the Duke of Marlborough arrived in England, I received his commands to attend him at Blenheim, where he was pleased to tell me, that when the government took care *to discharge him* from the claim of the workmen for the debt in the Queen's time, he intended to finish the building at his own expense. And, accordingly, from that time forwards he was pleased to give me his orders as occasion required, in things preparatory to it; till, at last, the affair of the debt being adjusted with the Treasury, and *owned to be the Queen's*, he gave me directions to set people actually to work, after having considered an estimate he ordered me to prepare of the charge, to

* Coxe MSS. vol., xlvi. p. 148.

finish the house, offices, bridges, and out-walls of courts and gardens, which amounted to fifty-four thousand pounds.

I spared for no pains or industry to lower the prices of materials and workmanship, on the reasonablest considerations of *sure and ready* payment, which before (as experiments show) was *precarious*. I made no step without the Duke's knowledge while he was well; *and I made none without the Duchess's after he fell ill;* and was so far, I thought, from being in her ill opinion, that even the last time I waited on her and my Lord Duke at Blenheim, (which was last autumn,) she showed no sort of *dissatisfaction on anything I had done*, and was pleased to express herself to Mr. Hawkesmore (who saw her after I had taken my leave) *in the most favourable and obliging manner of me;* and to enjoin him to *repeat to me* what she had said to him.

Thus I left the Duke and Duchess at Blenheim. But a small time after I arrived in London, Brigadier Richards showed me a packet he had received from her grace, in which (without any new matter having happened) she had given herself the trouble, in twenty or thirty sides of paper, to draw up a charge against me, beginning from the time this building was first ordered by the Queen, and concluding upon the whole, that I had brought the Duke of Marlborough into this unhappy difficulty, either to leave the thing unfinished, and by consequence useless to him and his posterity; or, by finishing it, to distress his fortune, and deprive his grandchildren of the provision he inclined to make for them.

To this heavy charge I know I need trouble the Duke of Marlborough with nothing more in my own justification than to beg he will just please to recollect that I never did anything without *his approbation;* and that I never had the misfortune to be once found fault with by him in my life.

As to the Duchess, I took the liberty, in a letter I sent to her on this occasion, to say, "that finding she was weary of my service, (unless my Lord Duke recovered enough to take things again into his own direction,) I would do *as I saw she desired*, never trouble her more."

I thought after this I could not wait on the Duke when she was present; and that if I endeavoured to do it at any other time, she would not like it. There has been no other reason whatever why I have not continued to pay my constant duty to him.

The other service I have mentioned, which her grace thought proper to lay her commands upon me, was the doing what might be in my power towards inclining the Duke of Newcastle to prefer my Lady Harriot Godolphin to all other women who were likely to be offered him. Her grace was pleased to tell me, on the breaking of this matter, I was the first body she had ever mentioned it to; and she gave me commission to open it to the Duke of Newcastle's relations, as well as to himself, which I accordingly did, and gave her from time to time an account of what passed, and how the disposition moved towards what she so much desired.

Her grace did not seem *inclined to think* of giving *such a fortune* as should be any great inducement to the *Duke's prefering this match* to others which might probably be offered; but she laid a very great and very just stress on the extraordinary qualifications and personal merits of my Lady Harriot, which she was pleased to say she thought might be more in my power to possess him rightly of than any other body she knew; and did not doubt but I would have that regard for the Duke of Marlborough, *and the advantage of his family*, as to take this part upon me, and spare no pains to make it successful.

This thing her grace desired I should do was so much with my own inclination, and what I was to say of the personal character of my Lady Harriot so truly my own

opinion of her, that I had no sort of difficulty in resolving to use all the credit I had with the Duke of Newcastle to prefer the match to all others.

His grace received the first intimation with all the regard to the alliance that was due to it, and the hopes of having a posterity descended from the Duke of Marlborough had an extraordinary weight with him; but I found he had thoughts about marriage not very usual with men of great quality and fortune, especially so young as he was. He had made more observations on the bad education of the ladies of the court and towne than any one would have expected, and owned he shou'd think of marriage with much more pleasure than he did, if he cou'd find a woman (fit for him to marry) that had such a turn of understanding, temper, and behaviour, as might make her a usefull friend, as well as an agreeable companion; but of such a one he seemed almost to despair.

I was very glad to find him in this sentiment; agreed entirely with him in it, and upon that foundation endeavoured, for two years together, to convince him the Lady Harriot Godolphin was, happily, the very sort of woman he so much desired, and thought so difficult to find.

The latter end of last summer he writ to me to Scarborough, to tell me he was come to an absolute resolution of marrying somewhere before the winter was over, and desired to know if I had anything new to say to him about my Lady Harriot.

Upon this I writ to the Duchess of Marlborough at the Bath, and several letters past between her grace and me on this fresh occasion, in which she thought fit to express her extreme satisfaction to find a thing revived she so much desired, though for some time past had retained but little hopes of.

Not long after, I waited on her and the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim; but not happening to be *any time alone with her*, and being to see the Duke of Newcastle

before there cou'd be anything new to speak upon, I did not wonder she said nothing to me of that matter. But when I came to London, I was much surprised to find the cause of it.

I met with two letters from the Duke of Newcastle, expressing a great earnestness to see me. I went immediately to him to Claremont, where he told me his impatience to see me had been to know what I might have further to say of Lady Harriot; what I had learnt of her conduct and behaviour at the Bath; what I might have observed of her at Blenheim; and, in short, that if I knew anything that could reasonably abate of the extraordinary impression I had given him of her, I would have that regard to the greatest concern of his life not to hide it from him, for that if he marryed her, his happiness would be entirely determined by her answering, or not answering, the character he had received of her from me, and upon which he solely depended. That he had therefore forborne making any step (though prest to it by Mr. Walters) that cou'd any way engage him, till he saw me again, and once for all received a confirmation of the character, so agreeable to his wishes, I had given him of my Lady Harriot.

As I had nothing to say to him on this occasion but what was still to her advantage, he came *to an absolute resolution of treating:* and asking me what the Duchess of Marlborough had said to me at Blenheim about the fortune, the letter at Scarborough having (amongst other things) been on that subject, I told him she had not said a word to me of it, or anything relating to the matter in general.

The Duke seemed much surprised to hear me say so, and told me he took it for granted she had let me know what lately passed through Mr. Walters, whom she had accidentally fallen acquainted with at the Bath, and engaged him in this affair. That he had even pressed him to enter into a direct treaty, but that he had made pretences

to decline it, being undetermined till he had once more had an opportunity of talking the whole matter over with me, especially on what related personally to my Lady Harriot, having resolved to make that his decisive point.

I told him it was very extraordinary the Duchess of Marlborough, after two years employing me, and finding I had succeeded in the very point she judged me fittest to serve her in, and by which point almost alone she hoped to bring this match about, shou'd drop me in so very short a manner; and that I cou'd conceive no cause good or bad for it, unless she was going to dismiss me from meddling any more in the building, and so judged it not proper to employ me any further in this other part of her service.

The Duke seemed inclined to hope I might be mistaken in that thought, and so desired I wou'd continue to act in this concern with her; upon which (calling Mr. Walters into the room) he was pleased to relate all that had passed through me from the beginning, with the Duchess of Marlborough, Lord Townsend, Mr. Walpole, &c., and ended in desiring we wou'd both join in bringing the matter to a conclusion, he being now determined to treat; and that we wou'd both write to the Duchess of Marlborough the next post.

I writ accordingly, and in the close of my letter mentioned the surprise I had been in to find she had not been pleased to continue her commands to me in a thing I had taken so much pains to serve her, and not without success.

But when I came to London, I heard of the charge her grace had thought fit to send up against me about the building, and so found I had not been mistaken in what I had told the Duke of Newcastle I apprehended might be the cause of her dropping me in so very easy a manner in what related to him.

The following Remarks were added by the Duchess to the above Letter.

Upon this false assertion of what the Duchess of Marlborough had said to Mr. Hawkesmoor, she met him at Mr. Richards' at Black Heath, and told him what Sir John Vanburgh had said as to the Duchess of Marlborough's message by him, upon which Mr. Hawkesmoor protested, as he had never seen her after Sir John went away, he never said any such thing to him; and that it had given him a great deal of trouble very often to see the unreasonable proceedings of Sir John.

What he repeats out of his own letter is quite different, as may be seen.

My Lady Harriot Godolphin had twenty-two thousand pounds to her portion, procured by the Duchess of Marlborough.

FROM THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Friday.

Sir,—I beg pardon for troubling you with this, but I am in a very odd distress; too much ready money. I have now 105,000*l.* dead, and shall have fifty more next weeke: if you can imploy it any way, it will be a very great favor to me.

I hope you will forgive my reminding you of Mr. Sewell's memorial for a majority; if any vouchers are wanting for his carecter, I believe Mr. Selwin will give him a very good one. I am, with great truth,

Your most obliged
And obedient servant,
MARLBOROUGH.

* Coxe MSS., vol. xv. p. 150.

LORD CONINGSBY TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

December 11, 1712.

The shortest day of the year dates this letter, and to me the most melancholy, because it is the first after I heard of thirty-nine's (Marlborough's) leaving the kingdom (under God) he had saved. I who have not a friend left, now he is gone, (yourself excepted,) have this only comfort, that I am sure his greatest enemies on the side of the water where he now is, will be much kinder to him than many of the pretended friends he left behind him have been for some years past. They have, however, their full reward, and being true Irishmen, by cutting the bough they stood upon themselves, have fallen from the very top of the tree, and have broke their own necks by their senseless politics of breaking his power, who alone had acquired by his merits interest enough to support theirs. Though I know more of this than any man now alive, yet I shall never make any other use of it but to beg that you, during his absence, will never trust to anything they, or any one they can influence, shall either say or do, since, to my certain knowledge, they were ever enemies to you and yours; and so thirty-nine (Marlborough) knows I have told him long; and if I had been so happy to have been credited, others had travelled, and not dear thirty-nine (Marlborough.) But past time is not to be recalled. God preserve him wherever he goes.

It is time to return my thanks for the paper I have received about the chaplain, and to assure you that now thirty-nine (Marlborough) is gone, there is nobody behind him in this kingdom more heartily concerned for the happiness of you and yours, &c.

* Coxe MSS., vol. xlvii. p. 8.

LORD CONINGSBY TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

Letters of Lord Coningsby to the Duchess of Marlborough, after the death of the Duke. (Referred to in vol. ii.)

Hampton Court in Hertfordshire, Oct. 14, 1720.

I received with the greatest pleasure imaginable your grace's commands, as I shall ever do to the last moment of my life, and obey them with a readiness as becomes one to do, who, with all his faults, has not those fashionable ones of fickleness and insincerity, which the dear Duchess of Marlborough has, to my knowledge, so often met with in this false world.

I am sure your grace is overjoyed to hear the Duke is so well, and the more so because it is truth beyond contradiction, that as we owe our liberties to him, so he, under God, owes his life to the care and tenderness of the best of wives.

My dearest girls order me to present their duty to your grace, and their services to Lady Dy and Lady Hun.

There is not upon the face of the earth anybody that is more than I am, and ever will be, &c.

LORD CONINGSBY TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.†

Did I not know myself to be so entirely innocent as never to have had a single thought, that if you had known it would have given the least umbrage of offence to your grace, the usage I have lately met with would be to me insupportable; but since that is my case, I can, though with great uneasiness, bear it now, as I did once before, till the happy time will come when your grace will be convinced that I am incapable of being otherwise than your faithfull

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 63. † Ibid. vol. xliii. p. 9.

servant; and that those who have persuaded you to believe the contrary are as great enemies to your grace, as I know they are to the true interest of their country. In the mean time, I beseech Heaven to let me learn by degrees to be without that agreeable conversation which I valued more than I can express. I can say no more, but conclude with assuring your grace, that, use me as you will, it is not in your power to make me otherwise than your grace's, &c.

Saturday, Six o'Clock.

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*Letters between Mr. Scrope and the Duchess of Marlborough.**

MR. SCROPE TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.

April 20, 1744.

Madam,—The letter which I had the honour to receive from your grace the 26th, hath given me great uneasiness, for I have always made it a rule not to intermeddle in family affairs, even of my relations and friends, and I should not have been so unguarded in what I presumed to mention to your grace about the Duke of Marlborough, had you not been pleased to hint what you inclined to do for his son, and had not my veneration for the name of a Duke of Marlborough, and my passion and desire to have it always flourish, and make a figure in the world, provoked me to say what I did, which I hope your grace will pardon. I know nothing of the Duke's affairs, nor how or with whom he is entangled; but sincerely wish he had your prudence and discretion, for the sake of himself and family. I herewith return to your grace the book you pleased to send me, which I read with an aching heart.

I am, with the utmost duty and esteem,

Madam,

Your Grace's most dutiful

and obedient humble servant,

J. SCROPE.

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p 132.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO MR. SCROPE.*

June 4, 1744.

Sir,—Your repeated civilities to me persuade me that you would willingly employ yourself to do me any reasonable service; and what I am now going to trouble you about is, I think, not unreasonable; at least I am told it is very customary, and almost a matter of form. I mean the prolongation of my term in Marlborough-house. I had it prolonged, I think, in the late king's time, and am now desirous to prolong it again for as long as I can, paying what is usual upon such occasions. Some years ago I asked Sir Robert Walpole to add the term of years that was lapsed to my lease of Marlborough-house, and likewise to do another little favour for me: he answered me, that as to Marlborough-house he would do it, because he could do it himself, but that for the other he must ask it of the king. Somebody then advised me to wait a little, and they would be both done together; and I was fool enough to take that advice. However, I have still half the term left. The house was entirely built at the Duke of Marlborough's expense, and moreover, I paid two thousand pounds to Sir Richard Beeling, for a pretended claim which he had upon part of the ground, so that I think I have as just a claim as any tenant of the crown can have. The late Lord Treasurer, I remember, granted a new term in a house upon crown land to Lord Sussex, an avowed enemy to the government, even when his first term was within a month of expiring, saying, it would be too great a hardship to take it from him. I am sure I am no enemy to the government, though possibly no friend to some in the administration, and therefore I hope that what would have been thought too hard in that case, will not be thought reasonable in mine. I am always sincere, and, for aught I know, some

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 133.

people may think me too much so; and I confess to you freely, that I take this opportunity, while Mr. Pelham is at the head of the Treasury, he being the only person in that station who, I believe, would oblige me, or to whom I would be obliged; and this I find, by the answer I have already mentioned from Sir Robert Walpole, is entirely in his power to do. He has been very civil to me, and the only one in employment who has been so for many years. I therefore desire you to mention this affair to him at a proper time, of which you are the best judge, and I put off my application till now, in order to be as little troublesome to him as possible, knowing that he has much less business in the summer. Your assistance and friendship in this matter will very much oblige

Your most faithful,
and most obliged,
humble servant,
S. MARLBOROUGH.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO MR. SCROPE.*

June 7, 1744.

I am very much obliged to you for your application in my behalf to Mr. Pelham, and to him for his civil answer to it. I desire you will make him my compliments and acknowledgements. I would much rather have the lease under the exchequer seal only, and not trouble his Majesty about this affair; but as you desire me to ask advice of counsell thereupon, I have accordingly sent it to my lawyer for his opinion. I shall employ one Mr. Keys, who is used to matters of this kind, to attend this affair through the offices, and he will draw up my memorial in the proper form to be presented to the treasury. Mr. Keys informs me that the lease of the Duke of Richmond's and the Mon-

* Coxe MSS, vol. xliii. p. 134.

tague's houses in Whitehall, and many others, are only under the exchequer seal; so that I make no doubt but that the opinion of my counsell will agree with my own inclinations. As I cannot express, as I would do, my acknowledgements to you for the kindness you have shewn, and the trouble you have taken in this affair, I will only say that I am, with great esteem and truth,

Your most faithful,
humble servant,
S. MARLBOROUGH.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO MR. SCROPE.*

September 11, 1744.

Sir,—'Tis a great while since I have troubled you with either thanks for the favours you have done me, or with any solicitations. The first, I believe, you don't care for; and I know, you have so much business that I was willing to delay, as long as I could, giving Mr. Pelham or you any trouble concerning Windsor parke. You know the whole history about that matter, how Queen Caroline took the allowance away, which her Majesty sent me word she would do, if I would not let her buy something out of my estate at Wimbledon, which was settled upon my family. This I refused, but in a very respectful manner. After this she kept her word, and took the allowance away, which I have in my grant. And I am sure you know that I never gave any occasion for it by bringing any bills for what I did there on my own account. I certainly have as much right to this allowance in my grant as I have to any part of my own estate, and there is no person that has a grant from the crown, that has not an allowance more or less for taking care of his Majesty's deer. I desire no favour, but only strict justice; and you will oblige me extremely if you will

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 136.

direct me in what manner I should proceed. I lost a considerable arrear, which his present Majesty did not think right to pay me, when King George the First died; saying, he was not obliged to pay his father's debts. And since the Queen stopped the allowance, I have been at great expenses. I have a right by my grant to five hundred pounds a year for making hay, buying it when the year is bad, paying all tradesmen's bills, keeping horses to carry the hay about to several lodges, and paying five keepers' wages at fifteen pounds a year each, and some gate-keepers, mole-catchers, and other expenses that I cannot think of. But as kings' parkes are not to be kept so low as private peoples', because they call themselves king's servants, I really believe that I am out of pocket upon this account, besides the disadvantage of paying ready money every year for what is done, and having only long arrears to sollicit for it. But I think, by your advice, this matter may be settled better, and that the treasury will either comply with my grant, or allow me to send the bills of what is paid upon his Majesty's account. If they think anybody will do it honester or cheaper than I have done, I shall be very glad to quit the allowance, and I should have quitted the parke long ago, if I had not laid out a very great sum in building in the great parke, and likewise in the little parke, where John Spencer lives.

I have another small trouble at this time with Mr. Sandys the cofferer. The custom has ever been to serve venison for the royal family and the nobles; and the cofferer sends to know what venison the parks can furnish. My Lord Sandys, to shew his breeding, made a letter be sent to ask this question, I believe from some footman. I sent to the keepers to know what they could furnish without hurting the parke; the number was a very great one, but I have always chosen to send more by a great many than any other ranger ever did. However, his lordship was pleased to sent warrants for two more than the number,

which I ordered the keepers to comply with. Since that, he has given out four warrants more above the number, which I forbade them to serve. For this year has been so bad for venison in all parkes but my own at Blenheim, that it has been seldom good. And Mr. Leg sent one of these warrants from the cofferer, who gave me a great deal of trouble, by being very impertinent in drawing warrants himself upon this park, signing only "*Leg.*" He certainly is a very great coxcomb; but I will say no more of that. The keepers send me word that it has been so bad a season this year, that I must buy a great deal of hay for the deer, or they will be starved this winter;—for though 'tis a great parke, it is full of roads; and there is nothing beautiful in it but clumps of trees, which, if Mr. Pelham does not prevent it, will be destroyed by the cheats of the surveyors, which in a great measure I have prevented for more than forty years.

Pray forgive me this long trouble, and be assured that you never obliged anybody in your life that is more sincerely, though I am insignificant,

Your friend and
humble servant,
S. MARLBOROUGH.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO MR. SCROPE.*

September 17, 1744.

Sir,—I give you many thanks for your enquiring after my health to-day. I am a little better than I was yesterday, but in pain sometimes, and I have been able to hear some of the letters I told you of read to-day; and I hope I shall live long enough to assist the historians with all the information they can want of me; but it is not possible for me to live to see a history of between thirty and forty years finished.

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 142.

I shall be contented when I have done what lies in my power.

* * * * * *

I cannot make up this letter without telling you something I have found in these papers, in the few I have heard read. My Lord Godolphin was prodigious careful to save all he could of the money of England, and to make the allies bear their proportion, according to the advantages they were to have, not to allow of anything that the parliament did not appropriate—and there were proper vouchers, and no douceurs. I have not found yet no more than so many crowns asked upon some occasious; now, one hears nothing but one hundred and fifty thousand pounds repeated over and over. That I suppose has been occasioned by the great success we have had, and that it was reasonable that one commander should have a great share himself, for his courage in standing all the fire, and for his wisdom in directing the whole matter. There is one letter of my Lord Godolphin's that pleased me much, though of no great consequence, but it shewed his justice and humanity. There was some money returned from England, the value of which was more in that country than it was here, and Lord Godolphin writes to the Duke of Marlborough that the advantage of that gain should be to England, or given amongst the soldiers, and that the paymaster should not have it. Contrary to that notion, I have been told, and I believe it is true, that Mr. Hanbury Williams had a place made for him, quite unnecessary, with fifteen hundred a year salary, and that it is lately found out that he has cheated the government of forty thousand pounds. I am not sure that this last part is true, but I hope it is, for I am sure there is not a more infamous man in England than he is in every part of his character.

THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO MR. SCROPE.*

September 20, 1744.

Sir,—Since I have heard from you, I have heard a great many things read which you seem to think would be of use in the history, and besides what I have mentioned before, of the great numbers writ in his own hand of my Lord Godolphin's to the Duke of Marlborough, I have found a great number of books of the Duke of Marlborough's letters, copied by Mr. Cardenoll; some of them to my Lord Godolphin, treasurer, Mr. St. John, Mr. Harley, and to a great number of others. My Lord Godolphin's own letters shew that he was a very knowing minister in all foreign affairs; though you never heard, I believe, that he boasted of the great respect that the Princess abroad had for him, nor did he tell ever any of the lords of the cabinet counsell that they knew nothing, and that France trembled at his name. I need not say anything of my Lord Godolphin's management and honesty in the treasury, for you know enough of that; but perhaps you do not know that he was so far from having pensions and grants, that if his elder brother had not died just before Mr. Harley turned him out, he must have been buried, as a great man in Plutarch's Lives was, by the public or his friends; though he never spent anything himself, excepting in charity and generosities to any of his friends that happened to be poor; for he was not so ingenious as some people are in making places for insignificant people, and quartering them upon the crown; and by some of the letters I have heard read, I find the demands he consented should be paid in the war were sometimes so many livres, and I have not yet come to anything higher than crowns, neither of which amounted to any very great sum. I believe there are at least twenty great books, of Mr. Cardenoll's copying, of the Duke of Marlborough's letters to

* Coxe MSS, vol xliii. p. 144.

the minister at home, and to the Princes abroad; and, in short, to those in England that were at all useful to contribute anything to the good of the common cause. It is impossible to read what I have done lately, without being in vapours, as you call it; to think how these two men were discarded after serving so many years, when she was Princess, and assisting her when she was perfectly ignorant what was to be done in a higher station. My Lord Treasurer was taken leave of by a letter sent by a groom. That was because I suppose Mrs. Harley was ashamed to see him after all the expressions she had made to him, and for all his disinterested services. When Mr. Freeman was discharged, it was by a letter also; though he was so remarkable for having always a great deal of good temper, it put him into such a passion, that he flung the letter into the fire; but he soon recovered himself enough to write her an answer, a copy of which I can shew you whenever you care to read it. One would think that my Lord Sandys had been at the head of the councill upon these occasions. Mr. Freeman had nothing to do with the management of the money, but only the war for the security and grandeur of the Queen and England, and had gained more than twenty sieges and pitched battles. How this business will end by the great undertaking of C. and his partner D., I cannot pretend to say, but I could say something in behalf of Lord ——, if he had not taken the last grant for the pension, after he had taken all the money out of the treasury. I am sure you can't suspect my being partial to him, and he really has some good qualities that made me love him extremely, as my Lord Marlborough and my Lord Godolphin did for many years, but I know they both thought he had not good judgment; and I thought he did not want it so much as to be persuaded by his friend C. to take the last pension, since his family was so vastly provided for. I thought he would have chosen rather to be his own master, and to have contributed what he could to secure his own

great property, by endeavouring to recover our very good laws, and secure our once happy island.

I am glad to find I have so much judgment as to trouble you no longer at this time, but I must beg of you that you will read one paper more, which I will send as soon as I can; who am

Your most obliged and troublesome
Humble servant,
S. MARLBOROUGH.

MR. SCROPE TO THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.*

September 21, 1744.

Madam,—When your grace can spare a quarter of an hour, I should be extremely obliged to you if you would give me leave to wait on you to return my humble thanks for the pleasure and honour of your picture and your other favours, and to acquaint your grace what progress is made in the commands you were pleased to commit to the care of,

Madam,
Your grace's most faithful and most
Obliged humble servant,
J. SCROPE.

LETTER ADDRESSED BY THE DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH TO THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE.

Communicated by W. Upcott, Esq.†

Marlborough House, August 25, 1735.

My Lord,—I was ill in bed (as I frequently am) when I received the honour of your grace's letter. I find by it, notwithstanding the many civil expressions you are pleased

* Coxe MSS., vol. xliii. p. 147.

† This letter is probably in continuation of the Duchess of Marlborough's to the Duke of Newcastle, of August 1, 1735.—See vol. ii. p. 476.

to make use of, that I must be forced to sitt down contented with a refusal, and the Duke of St. Albans is to be gratified at my expense. Some people, perhaps, may wonder it should be so, but I have for a long time ceased wondering at anything.

If I enter any farther into this affair, 'tis not, I assure you, with the least view that anything I can urge will have an effect; but 'tis some satisfaction to show that I apprehend myself still in the right, though I should have the misfortune not to prevail by doing so. There can be but three considerations to induce the Duke of St. Albans to insist on this point, which are, that he believes he has a right to it, or that it will be of use to him, or that it will mortifie me. I think I have already sufficiently proved that he has not the least glimmering of right to it. I have beat him, if I may say so, out of his fortifications, and forced him in his castle to yield up the constable's pretensions; and I will now as plainly shew that it can be of no use to him: and then the third reason alone will subsist, which is, that 'tis done to mortifie me, against which there is no arguing. All I can say is, I think I have not deserved it. The Duke lives, as other constables have done, at the Keep; and, unless he chooses to goe out of his way, (which for ought I know he may,) I can't see the least benefit it can be to him. It is not his road to London, neither is there any road through the park, and I hope none will ever be made, and for this reason, as I told you before, nobody but the royal family and ranger were ever suffered to goe in with their coaches. The Duke of Marlborough gave the Duke of St. Albans a key to walk in it at his pleasure, but little imagined to have his civility requited in the manner it was, by having other keys made from it, the Duke distributing them as he thought fit, coming into the park with his coach and chaise, and making use of it in many other respects, just as if he had been the ranger. But your grace tells me this favour could not well be refused him, and that he is

not to go through the park in right of his office, but by her Majesty's leave. I am sorry your grace imagined that this way of turning it softened the point, because, in my poor apprehension, it seems extremely to aggravate the injury. To give the Duke leave, contrary to my earnest representations and entreaties, (who am ranger of the park,) when he owns he has no right to it, seems so manifest a partiality in his favour, that it cannot be but exceeding mortifying to me. If his grace's merit be not very great, it is natural to conclude my demerit must be so; and as I am not conscious of having deserved this disregard, I am the more concerned to find it. I have formerly been in courts as your grace is now, and I there observed that the ministerial policy always loaded people with favours in proportion to their abilities, and the use they could be of in return to them. Perhaps I may be mistaken, but I ask your grace, Is the Duke of St. Albans a man of that high importance as to be worth making a precedent for—which may be attended with ill consequences, and in process of time bring difficultys on the crown itself? How can others who live at Windsor be refused this favour, which has been granted to the Duke of St. Albans, simply as such? His predecessors in his office, I may say without wronging him, have some of them been as distinguished as himself. Prince Rupert, son to the Queen of Bohemia, and nephew to King Charles, was one of them that frequently resided at the Keep, and never desired nor ever enjoyed this privilege; the Dukes of Northumberland and Kent, Lord Cobham, Lord Carlisle, and others, never thought of asking it; but though his predecessors never had it, will his successors for the future ever be content without it? No, though they should not be of equal merit with his grace. So that, in truth, my lord, you see I am not pleading on my own account singly, but I'm endeavouring to support the true interest of the crown, and making a stand against an innovation that will hereafter bring difficultys upon them. But I cannot flatter myself

that anything I can say will gett this leave revoked; therefore I should be glad to have it explain'd how far, my lord, it is to extend. Is the Duke to have the privilege of giving keys, as he actually has done, to whomsoever he pleases? Are they all to come into the park with their coaches and chaises? This will greatly prejudice the park, but may be done if her Majesty pleases to order it. But as to his putting cattle, and authorising his gamekeepers to kill game for his own use and the Dowager Duchess of St. Albans, this I take to be an encroachment on my grant, and that I presume is not intended, nor can I be content to suffer it. I am sensible I have made this letter too tedious; but 'tis extremely natural to say all one can in defence of what one takes to be one's right. This, my lord, must plead my excuse, and engage you to pardon

Your Grace's most obedient
And most humble servant,
S. MARLBOROUGH.

To the Duke of Newcastle.

An Abstract of the last Will and Testament of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.

This is the last Will and Testament of me, Sarah Duchess Dowager of Marlborough, made this eleventh day of August, in the year of our Lord, 1744.

My will and desire is that I may be buried at Blenheim, near the body of my dear husband John late Duke of Marlborough; and if I die before his body is removed thither, I desire Francis Earl of Godolphin to direct the same to be removed to Blenheim aforesaid, as was always intended.

And I direct that my funeral may be made private, and with no more expense than decency requires; and that no

mourning be given to any one, except such of my servants as shall attend at my funeral.

As concerning my estate, I give the same in manner and form following.

I devise to Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Beversham Filmer, of Lincoln's Inn, Esq., their heirs, &c., all my manors, parsonage, rectory, advowsons, messuages, lands, tenements, tithes, and hereditaments in the several counties of Surrey, Oxford, Buckingham, and Huntingdon, which were lately the several estates of Richard Holditch, Francis Hawes, William Astell, and Robert Knight, Esqrs.

And also my manors, &c., in the said county of Buckingham, which were late the estate of Richard Hampden, Esq., deceased.

And also my manor, rectory, &c., in the county of Buckingham, which were some time the estate of Sir John Wittewronge, Bart., deceased.

And also my manor, &c. in the same county, formerly the estate of Sir Thomas Tyrrel, Bart., deceased.

And also my manor, &c. in the county of Bedford, which were late the estate of Sir John Meres, Knight.

And also my freehold and copyhold messuages, &c. in the county of Bedford, which were late the estate of Bromsall Throckmorton, Esq.

And also my manor, &c. in possession and reversion, in the county of Bedford, which were late the estate of Edward Snagg, Esq.

And also my rectory and tithes of Steventon, in the county of Bedford, which were late the estate of Peter Floyer, Esq.

And also my lands, &c. in the county of Bedford, which were the estate of John Culliford, Esq., and Mary his wife.

And also my manor, &c. in the county of Berks, which were the estate of Richard Jones, Esq.

And also my manor, &c. in the county of Berks, which were the estate of Robert Packer, Esq.

And also my messuage, lands, &c. in the county of Berks, which were late the estate of Thomas Bedford, clerk.

And also my manor, &c. in the county of Oxford, which were late the estate of Sir Cecil Bishop, Bart.

And also my manors, &c. in Northamptonshire, which were late the estate of Mrs. Elizabeth Wiseman.

And also my manor, &c. in the county of Northampton, late the estate of Sir William Norwich, Bart.

And also my manor, &c. in the county of Northampton, late the estate of Nathaniel Lord Crewe, Lord Bishop of Durham.

And also that part of my estate at St. Albans still retained by me.

And also my manors, &c. in the county of Stafford, which were the estate of Viscount Fauconberg.

And also my manor, &c. freehold and copyhold, in the county of Norfolk, late the property of Gabriel Armiger, Esq.

And also my manors, &c. in the county of Leicester and Northampton, which were the estates of Sir Thomas Cave.

And all other my manors, &c. in the counties of Surrey, Oxford, Huntingdon, Buckingham, Bedford, Berks, Northampton, Hertford, Stafford, Norfolk, and Leicester, (always subject to charges made by indenture on the marriage of my grandson, John Spencer, Esq. to Georgiana Carolina, his now wife, daughter to Lord Carteret.)

John Spencer, the son of my said grandson John Spencer, shall have, arising from the said estates &c., an annuity (during the life of his father) of 2,000*l.*, which he shall be empowered legally to enforce.

And whereas the late Duke of Marlborough directed by his will that a yearly sum of 3,000*l.* should be charged upon the estates devised upon Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Be-

versham Filmer, for each and every of the sons which may be born to Charles Spencer, (now Duke of Marlborough,) and the grandson of the same; I, with a desire to carry out such intention, hereby direct that the said sum be chargeable upon the said estates so devised, during the joint lives of the said Charles Duke of Marlborough and such son or grandson: Always provided that such son or grandson shall not covenant to do or do any act which shall set aside or bar any intent declared or expressed in the will of the late Duke of Marlborough; in which case such annuity shall utterly cease.

Upon such son or grandson marrying and attaining the age of twenty-one years, the said annual sum of 3,000*l.* shall no longer be paid to him; but an annual charge not exceeding 1,500*l.* shall be paid to any woman with whom he shall marry, for the term of her life.

Provided always, that my said estates shall never be chargeable with more than one such annuity, as a provision for any such woman, at one and the same time.

And all my said manors, &c. devised to Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Beversham Filmer, subject to the annuities and charges therein expressed, I will and direct the same to be in TRUST for my grandson John Spencer, for and during the term of his natural life; and after that, to the USE of the said Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Beversham Filmer, and their heirs, during the natural life of John Spencer, in TRUST, to preserve the contingent uses thereof; the said John Spencer to receive the rents and profits thereof, (with similar covenants relating to John Spencer the younger, and succeeding heirs.)

And whereas the dean and chapter of Christ's Church-Canterbury, did lease unto me the scite and court lodge of the manor of Agney, in the county of Kent, I hereby bequeath the said court lodge, &c.

And also my lands, &c. held on lease in the county of Buckingham.

And also all other my leasehold estates (excepting such

as I shall otherwise dispose of) to the USE of the said Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Beversham Filmer, in TRUST for such uses and persons as are herein expressed concerning my various manors and freeholds.

ITEM, I give unto Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Beversham Filmer, all my manor of Wimbledon, &c. in Surrey.

And also my leasehold rectory of Wimbledon, for their USE, and in trust, &c. (with similar covenants respecting John Spencer and his heirs.)

And my will is, that all my household goods, pictures, and furniture that shall be in my said buildings and gardens at Wimbledon, shall be considered as heirlooms.

And my will is, and I hereby expressly declare, that if the said John Spencer (my grandson) shall become bound or surety for any person or persons whatever for any sum or sums of money, or if he, or any person or persons in *trust* for him, shall take from any king or queen of these realms any pension, or any office or employment, civil or military, (except the rangership of the great or little parks at Windsor,) then shall all these my intents and covenants in behalf of the said John Spencer become void, as if he were actually dead.

(*The same with regard to John Spencer the younger.*)

And whereas by lease from the crown I am possessed of all that capital messuage which I now inhabit, called *Marlborough-house*, with all its appurtenances, within or near the parishes of St. James, the liberty of Westminster, and St. Martin in-the-Fields, in the county of Middlesex, for the term of fifty years:

Now I hereby give and bequeath all my interest in the said capital messuage, &c. unto my executors (subject to such charge thereon as is hereinafter mentioned) upon the TRUSTS following: That is to say, in *trust* for the said John Spencer the father, for so long a period of the fifty years as he shall live; and then in trust for George Spencer, commonly called Marquis of Blandford, eldest son and heir ap-

parent of Charles Duke of Marlborough; and after his decease, in trust for any son of the said George Spencer who shall attain his majority.

Provided the said George Spencer shall have no son, then in *trust* for Charles Spencer, second son of Charles Duke of Marlborough, and his son, (with similar provisions, provided Charles Spencer shall have no son, conferring the interest upon such other son of Charles Duke of Marlborough as shall attain his majority.)

Provided always, that should any attempt be made by any of these legatees to dispose, let, exchange, or give up possession in any manner of Marlborough-house, or commit any act likely to subvert any of the declared intentions of the late Duke of Marlborough with respect to his will, such bequest shall become utterly void, and my executors are hereby empowered to dispose of all my interest in the said messuage, and pay over the money as part of my personal estate.

I am likewise possessed of another lease from the crown, bearing date Feb. 18, 1728, not yet expired.

Now I give and bequeath the said lease to my executors in *trust* for the holder of Marlborough-house for the time being, and subject to the same conditions and limitations.

And whereas I am empowered by the Duke of Marlborough's will to dispose of such goods as are my own in Marlborough-house, and of which there is an inventory:

Now I bequeath all such goods, furniture, pictures, &c., to my grandson John Spencer, his executors, &c.

Item, I give unto my grandson, Charles Duke of Marlborough, all my furniture, pictures, &c., which shall be in Blenheim-house, in Oxfordshire, at the time of my decease; but upon the express condition that he do not remove any of the goods or furniture from Althorp-house, but permit the same to be enjoyed by my grandson, John Spencer, except the same shall be of greater value than those in Blenheim-house; then may he remove such part thereof as

shall leave no more in value than shall be equal to that which at the time of my decease was in Blenheim-house; and should he not perform this condition, then I leave the said furniture, &c. in Blenheim-house, to John Spencer my grandson, his executors, &c.

And my will is, that all my goods, &c. in my mansion-house at Holywell, in St. Albans, in the county of Hertford, shall continue there, and be always held therewith, as far as the law will permit of.

And whereas by letters patent on the 18th day of July, in the eighth year of her reign, her late majesty Queen Anne granted me the *rangership of Windsor Great Park*, giving the said place in TRUST to James Craggs, Samuel Edwards, and Charles Hodges, for me and my heirs:

Now I will that the said Samuel Edwards shall hold the same in trust for my grandson John Spencer, his heirs, &c.

And I give all the goods, &c., which may be in the chief lodge, belonging to me, to my said grandson John Spencer. (*Similar provisions with regard to the Little Park.*)

I give unto my granddaughter Isabella Duchess Dowager of Manchester all my piece of ground and the messuage thereon in Dover-street, in the county of Middlesex; together with all the goods, furniture, &c., in the said messuage.

I give unto Hugh Earl of Marchmont, and Beversham Filmer, Esq., and James Stephens, all my leasehold piece of ground and brick messuage in Grosvenor-street, in the parish of St. George's, Hanover-square, in *trust* for *John Spencer the son.*

ITEM, I hereby give unto Hugh Earl of Marchmont, Beversham Filmer, Thomas Lord Bishop of Oxford, and James Stephens, my joint executors, 2,000*l.* each, for their care and trouble about this my will.

All other property whatsoever, comprising money, mortgages, securities, &c., after payment of my just debts, and

such bequests as herein before or after in any codicil mentioned, I bequeath to my said executors, in trust for John Spencer, my grandson.

This will, which occupies in the original eight skins of parchment, is witnessed by the following persons, and signed and sealed by the Duchess.

FANE.
EDMUND LONDON.
W. LEE.
JOHN SCROPE.

THE CODICIL.

This is a CODICIL to the last will and testament of me, *Sarah Duchess Dowager of Marlborough*, which I duly made and published, bearing date the eleventh day of August instant, and which will I do hereby ratify and confirm in all respects.

Whereas I am possessed of several long annuities, amounting to the yearly sum of two thousand six hundred pounds,

Now I bequeath the same to my executors, in *trust* for the following uses—

To James Stephens, 300*l.* yearly.

To Grace Bidley, 300*l.* yearly.

To Robert Macarty, Earl of Clancarty, the yearly sum of 1000*l.*

To Elizabeth Arbor, the yearly sum of 200*l.*

To Anne Patten, the yearly sum of 130*l.*

To Olive Lofft, the yearly sum of 40*l.*

To John Griffiths, the yearly sum of 200*l.*

To Hannah Clarke, the yearly sum of 200*l.*

To Jeremiah Lewis, the yearly sum of 50*l.*

To John Dorset, the yearly sum of 50*l.*

To each of my two chairmen, John Robins and George Humphreys, the yearly sum of 20*l.*

To Walter Jones, the yearly sum of 30*l.*, and to each of my footmen that shall continue in my service to the time of my decease, the yearly sum of 10*l.*

To Margaret and Catherine Garmes, the yearly sum each of 10*l.*

The overplus of such long annuities to be paid to John Spencer.

I give to John Spencer ALL my gold and silver plate, seals, trinkets, and small pieces of japan.

I give to the wife of John Spencer, the son of my said grandson, (if he should live to be married,) my diamond pendants, which have three brilliant drops to each, and all the rest of my jewels which I shall not otherwise dispose of; and in case he die unmarried, I give the same to his father.

I give to my granddaughter, Mary Duchess of Leeds, my diamond solitaire, with the large brilliant diamond it hangs to; also the picture in water colours of the late Duke of Marlborough, drawn by Lens.

I give to my daughter, Mary Duchess of Montagu, my gold snuff-box, that has in it two pictures of her father, the Duke of Marlborough, when he was a youth. Also a picture of her father covered with a large diamond, and hung to a string of small pearls for a bracelet, and two enamelled pictures for a bracelet of her sisters, Sunderland and Bridgewater.

I give to Thomas Duke of Leeds 3000*l*

I give to my niece, Frances Lady Dillon, 1000*l.*

I give to Philip Earl of Chesterfield, out of the great regard I have for his merit, and the infinite obligations I have received from him, my best and largest brilliant diamond ring, and 20,000*l.*

I give to William Pitt, Esq., the sum of 10,000*l.*, upon account of his merit in the noble defence he made for the support of the laws of England, and to prevent the ruin of his country.

I give to Mr. Burroughs, Master in Chancery, 200*l.* to buy a ring.

I give to my executors 500*l.* each to buy them rings.

I give to the Earl of Clancarty, above what I have already given him, 1000*l.*

Whereas John Earl of Stair owes me 1000*l.* upon bond, and his wife bought me some things in France, but always declined telling me what they cost, I desire him to pay my Lady Stair, and to accept the residue of the 1000*l.*, together with such other sums as I have lent to him.

I give to Juliana Countess of Burlington my bag of gold medals, and 1000*l.* to buy a ring, or something in remembrance of me.

I give to the Duchess of Devonshire my box of travelling plate.

I give to James Stephens, over and above what I have already given him, the sum of 1300*l.*, and as a further compensation for the great trouble he will have as my acting executor, the yearly sum of 300*l.*

To Grace Ridley I give, over and above what I have already given, the sum of 15,000*l.*; an enamelled picture of the Duke of Marlborough; a little picture of the Duke in a locket, and my own picture by Sir Godfrey Kneller, and my striking watch, which was the Duke of Marlborough's.

I give to Anne Ridley the sum of 3000*l.*

I give to Mrs. Jane Pattison my striking watch, which formerly belonged to her mistress, Lady Sunderland.

One half of my clothes and wearing apparel I give to Grace Ridley, and the other half equally between Anne Patter and Olive Lofft.

I give to each of my chairmen 25*l.*

I give to each of my servants one year's wages.

I give to the poor of the town of Woodstock 300*l.*

I desire that Mr. Glover and Mr. Mallet, who are to write the history of the Duke of Marlborough, may have the use of all papers and letters relating to the same found in any of my houses. And I desire that these two gentlemen may write the said history, that it may be made publick to the world how truly the late Duke of Marlborough wished that justice should be done to all mankind, who, I am sure, left King James with great regret, at a time when 'twas with hazard to himself; and if he had been like the patriots of the present times, he might have been all that an ambitious man could hope for, by assisting King James to settle Popery in England.

I desire that no part of the said history may be in verse.

And I direct that the said history shall not be printed without the approbation of the Earl of Chesterfield and my executors.

I give to Mr. Glover and Mr. Mallet 500*l.* each for writing the history.

(Here follows a contingent provision for the younger children of Charles Spencer, Duke of Marlborough.)

I give to Thomas Duke of Leeds my estate near St. Albans, and my freehold at Romney Marsh, Kent.

I give to Philip Earl of Chesterfield my manor at Wimbledon, and also my manors in Northampton and Surrey.

I give to the Earl of Clancarty my manors and lands in the county of Buckingham.

To William Pitt I give my manor, &c., in the county of Buckingham, late the estate of Richard Hampden, Esq.; and leasehold in Suffolk; and lands, &c. in Northampton.

And to —— Bishop, Esq., my grandson, my manor, &c. in Oxford, with the furniture, &c.

To Hugh Earl of Marchmont, my manor, &c. in Buckingham, late the estate of Sir John Witteronge, Bart.; and also my manor, &c. in the same county, late the estate of Sir Thomas Tyrrel.

To Thomas Lord Bishop of Oxford, my manor, &c. in Bedford.

To Beversham Filmer, Esq., my manors, &c. in Leicester and Northampton, late the estates of Sir Thomas Cave.

To Dr. James Stephens, my estates, &c. in Berks and Huntingdon.

And all other undisposed of estates or effects to John Spencer, his heirs, &c.

SARAH MARLBOROUGH.

Dated August 15th, 1744.

(Witnessed by) SANDWICH.
GEO. HEATHCOTE.
HENRY MARSHALL.
RICHARD HOARE.

THE END.

LONDON:
BOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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